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BUXTON, SARAH WALLACE. Production of The Balcony by Jean Genet.
(1977) Directed by: Dr. Herman Middleton.

The purpose of this thesis was three-fold: 1. to research The Balcony by Jean Genet in order to organize a scholarly approach for directing a production of the play; 2. to record direction of the play; 3. to evaluate the research and direction and its effect on production. The thesis is a compilation of the director's research, analysis and experience with the production.

Part One is the director's analysis of the script including: 1. historical considerations; 2. stylistic analysis; 3. character analysis and description; 4. setting analysis; 5. justification of scriptural choice; and 6. directorial interpretation of the play for production.

Part Two is the prompt book for the director's production of The Balcony which took place on November 29, 30 and December 1, 2 and 3, 1972 in the theatre of W. Raymond Taylor Drama and Speech Building at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro. The prompt book is the production script which includes notation on: 1. blocking; 2. composition; 3. details of characterization; 4. stage business; 5. pace, rhythm and tempo; and 6. technical cues. Interspersed within the prompt book are photographs and figures.

Part Three is the director's evaluation of the production. This evaluation is compiled of: 1. a comparison of the director's original scriptural analysis and how it became manifest in production; 2. a discussion of the actor-director relationship throughout the production period; 3. an examination of the audience reaction to the production; and 4. the director's personal observations.

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PRODUCTION OF THE BALCONY BY JEAN GENET

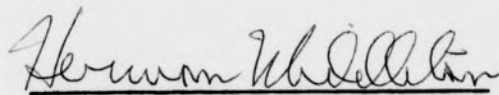
by

Sarah Wallace Buxton

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CHAPTER I

DIRECTORIAL ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION
OF GENET'S THE BALCONYHistorical Analysis

Even if his plays were not particularly interesting in themselves, even if they were not important examples of a new dramatic technique, Jean Genet would have some of the fascination of a hunchback turned ballet dancer.¹

Jean Genet was born in Paris in December of 1910, father unknown. Abandoned at birth, he was turned over to French Public Assistance from which he was placed, at age seven, in a foster home of Catholic peasants. At age ten he was caught pilfering, labeled a thief, and sent to Mettray reformatory. At age twenty-one he received his birth certificate and discovered and assumed his surname, Genet.²

In his 620 page novel, Saint Genet, Jean-Paul Sartre gives a brilliant though somewhat philosophical account of these events in one man's life and of how society reflected and labelled a human being who, knowing no parents but society itself, accepted and acted as he believed he was expected. Genet himself professes to this day that he does not know whether or not he committed that first crime, but the boy and the man have accepted it as truth in the desire for some force by which to guide his life.

¹George Wellwarth, The Theatre of Protest and Paradox (New York: New York University Press, 1964), p. 127.

²"Jean Genet," Royal Shakespeare Company Program for The Balcony (London: Aldwych Theatre, November, 1971), pp. 10-11.

In need of security, Genet maintained his child-like fascination with doing what was expected of him and accepted the values of his new found society of reformatories and prisons as the moral codes by which to live. By age fifteen he had become a criminal and a homosexual. By the time he was thirty he had been convicted for theft twenty-seven times and had delved as frequently into drug smuggling and male prostitution, among other crimes, and was well on the way to defining his own world. In his novel Thief's Journal, Genet discloses the morality of his new world:

Even on üter den linden I had a feeling of being in a camp organized by bandits. . . . This is a nation of thieves, I felt. If I steal here, I accomplish no special act that could help me to realize myself. I merely obey the habitual order of things. I do not destroy it.³

Sartre maintains that Genet's new hierarchy of values was justified and in its evil was actually a child-like innocence of Good. "Good is only an illusion. Evil is a nothingness which arises upon the ruins of Good."⁴ He also maintains that,

Genet had nothing, which amounts to saying that he has an eminent right over everything. At this point there begins the systematic turning of the positive into the negative and the negative into the positive. . . . In the "land of Chimeras," a conversion of signs is sufficient to change penury into wealth.⁵

Sartre defines that Genet is Good as he has reached the heights of rank in his new found society. Therefore, when Genet began writing in

³Martin Esslin, The Theatre of the Absurd (Garden City, New York: Doubleday and Company, Inc., 1969), p. 168.

⁴Allan Lewis, The Contemporary Theatre (New York: Crown Publishers, Inc., 1971), p. 285.

⁵Jean-Paul Sartre, "Saint Genet," in The Theatre of the Double: Genet and Ionesco, ed. by Kelly Morris (New York: Bantam Books, 1969), p. 16.

prison in 1940, he was reaching a liturgical height of literary achievement. His first poem, La Condamne a Mort, was written while in prison in 1940. Between 1942 and 1945, in and out of prison, he wrote his first prose works, Our Lady of the Flowers and Miracle of the Rose, both titles reflecting the religious individuality this "pure child" was instilled with.

Then, from the security of criminal life, Genet began to venture back into society. By this time, the mid-1940's, the twentieth century world was thought to have mastered all questions concerning man and reality. However, the increasing technological advances sharply conflicted with humane ideals and, as a result, an irrational world became manifest, one in which wars, poverty, racial hatred and a destructive environment prevailed. Reason now failed to answer spiritual questions and the contingency of the human life had left man with no definitions of Good and Evil except those coming from within himself. Genet felt that any personal judgments could come only from man's emotions, feelings, appetites and instincts. He then reverted to crime, his only instinctual accomplishment (as had been defined by society), and became an habitual offender.⁶ By this time he was even driven to confess to crimes he had not committed in order to be reinstated into prison, where he'd found the only structural society of any reason.

Sartre, having met Genet in 1944, found Genet to be the most perfect example of the Existential Man, the philosophical genre he defined as "the human creature who consciously chooses his own selfhood and then

⁶Lewis, The Contemporary Theatre, pp. 261-262.

enacts the consequences of choice."⁷ In his own words, Genet exposes his own selfhood:

It was not at any particular period of my life that I decided to be a thief. My laziness and my daydreaming having led me to the Maison Correctionnelle at Mettray, where I was to stay till I was twenty-one. I escaped, and to gain the signing-up bonus, joined up for five years. After a few days (in the Foreign Legion) I deserted, taking with me the suitcases of some Negro officers. For a time I loved stealing, but prostitution appealed more to my easygoing ways. I was twenty . . .⁸

Sartre also realized the purity of the literary achievement of his Existential Man:

In willing himself to be a thief to the utmost limit, Genet plunges into a dream; in willing his dream to the point of madness, he makes himself a poet; in willing poetry to the final triumph of the word, he becomes a man; and the man has become the truth of the poet, just as the poet had been the truth of the thief.⁹

When, in 1948, Genet was committed to life imprisonment as an habitual offender, Sartre and his proponents, most notably Jean Cocteau, petitioned the French Government which in turn caused Genet to be granted a pardon by President Auriol. These elements of recognition combined with his true literary worth have allowed Genet to become known as one of the most controversial and interesting writers of the post World War II French avant-garde movement.

Genet began writing for the theatre in 1946. Sartre maintains that he turned to the stage because of "the element of fake, of sham, of

⁷George Braziller, "Introductory Note," for Saint Genet, by Jean-Paul Sartre (New York: George Braziller, 1963).

⁸Esslin, The Theatre of the Absurd, pp. 167-168.

⁹Ibid., p. 195.

artificiality."¹⁰ Yet Genet had found the theatre to be the medium by which to attain a legendary "saintliness," to be gained by expressing his views of the sham of the Western world and by defining his own "logic of the stage."¹¹ His approach is most concisely expressed by Genet himself: "What's going to follow is false, and you are not going to accept it as gospel truth. Truth is not my strong point. But one must lie in order to be true."¹²

Genet's aspiration to "saintliness" is analogous to the glory he sought by stealing to become for society "A Thief." This desire for glory made him turn his life toward literature: "It is what language offers me to evoke it, to talk about it, render it, to achieve legend . . . I aspire your recognition, your consecration."¹³ This quest, entitled "saintliness," he defined in Thief's Journal as "turning pain to good account. It means forcing the devil to be God. It means obtaining the recognition of evil."¹⁴ Brustein defines it as "a condition determined as much by the outer world as by inner qualities--a kind of glory imposed on you by others."¹⁵ Genet also equates "saintliness" with beauty:

¹⁰Robert Brustein, The Theatre of Revolt (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1964), p. 386.

¹¹Frederick Lumley, New Trends in 20th Century Drama (London: C. Tinling and Company Limited, 1967), p. 214.

¹²Brustein, The Theatre of Revolt, p. 386.

¹³Ibid., p. 380.

¹⁴Jean Genet, The Thief's Journal, trans. by Bernard Frechtman (New York: Greenleaf Publishing Company, 1965), p. 220.

¹⁵Brustein, The Theatre of Revolt, p. 380.

I want only to fulfill myself in the rarest of destinies. I have only a dim notion of what I will be. I want it to have a graceful curve, slightly bent towards evening, but a hitherto unseen beauty, lovely because of the danger which works away at it, overwhelms it, undermines it. Oh let me be only utter beauty, I shall go quickly or slowly, but I shall dare what must be dared. . . . I want at every moment to create it . . . so that at every moment I may be guided by a will to saintliness until the time when I am so luminous that people will say, "He is a saint," or more likely, "He was a saint."¹⁶

From the synthesis of saintliness, beauty and evil, Genet's world in art expresses a beauty in evil and perversion. His goal is to glorify the bad and

to make it the subject of poetry and ceremonial, and by inverting the order of things, to bring the audience to a state of bafflement in which it is forced to admit the plausibility of this other world, even to doubt the reality of the one it has lived in.¹⁷

From this reversal of Good and Evil accrues Genet's theatre of illusion where the question of reality is predominant.¹⁸

Stylistic Analysis

Martin Esslin classifies Genet as an Absurdist. At first study this is understandable, as Genet, along with Beckett, Ionesco, Adamov and other contemporaries, are united in their quest for reality as they reflect their disparity of Western man "dehumanized in a mass culture"¹⁹ where God has deserted; science and reason have become illusory; and the individual, being unable to communicate, is trapped in the contemplation

¹⁶Ibid., p. 380.

¹⁷John Killinger, World in Collapse: The Vision of Absurd Drama (New York: Dell Publishing Co., 1971), p. 36.

¹⁸Ibid., p. 60.

¹⁹Robert Brustein, Seasons of Discontent (New York: Simon and Shuster, 1967), p. 256.

of his own image with the only certainty being death. These playwrights are also equal in their disgust with the realistic theatre, seen as false, anachronistic, dishonest, and destructive, concerned with the private neuroses of domesticated man. The aim of these dramatists came to be the rejection of the realistic plot, action and crisis, psychologically developed characters, and the logistics of time and space.²⁰ These characteristics are most notably attributed to existential philosophy, of which Genet is a proponent. However, in this director's analysis, the structural premises on which Esslin classifies Genet as an Absurdist are wrong in two instances, and in the others prove only that Genet "has gone well beyond the limited boundaries of the avant-garde"²¹ in creating his own theatre.

First, the Absurdist basically advocate a total lack of reason and order. Genet, however, creates a new reason by

turning the world of Reason upside down to construct a separate order in which Evil is the highest Good and Crime the purest of emotional experiences. His outcasts impose on criminality a beauty of its own; crime becomes the final condemnation of accepted practices.²²

Second, Esslin attributes Genet with the rejection of a didactic purpose.²³ Genet's theatre, like himself, is composed of paradoxes and inner conflicts. As outrageous as his revolt appears, his dramatic works demand, as did the thief in society, the existence of a traditional social, moral and religious framework by which to remain in contrast to.

²⁰ Lewis, The Contemporary Theatre, pp. 259, 262.

²¹ Brustein, Theatre of Revolt, p. 377.

²² Lewis, The Contemporary Theatre, p. 263.

²³ Esslin, The Theatre of the Absurd, p. 197.

And while of an inverted world, Genet still maintains a morality. Genet himself professes his purpose in writing:

It would be madness to believe that ideas alone, the exchange of ideas and common actions could suffice to remake the world. They are necessary of course, but what every man discovers in his own individuality is necessary as well.²⁴

In this director's opinion, Genet's didactic purpose has obviously become manifest as a reality. This is best exemplified by reactions to the man and his literature. Jean Cocteau, who considers Genet to be a great poet, believes him also to be a psychologist and a "moralist in the fullest sense of the term . . . of a severe and inflexible morality from which he never departs."²⁵ And, Violette Leduc, in a rather poetic vein, exemplifies the personal sense of morality which may be received from Genet:

Genet, the treasure trove of morality. He's the air of health. His ease of manner. His self possession. His nonchalance. His peremptory tone. His presence, as perfect as a perfectly tied knot. Yes, a definite prescence. A storm shower sweeping away all your mists. Genet pumped oxygen into the city; into the apartment; into my existence.²⁶

Thus far the director has, in her analysis, negated two measures by which Esslin classifies Genet as an Absurdist. In order to refute the remaining statements in the total classification, an analytical summation of the first two statements must be drawn analogous to Genet's intention in theatre. Genet's approach for fulfilling his didactic purpose is to

²⁴Jean Genet, Zoom Magazine, 1971, quoted in Royal Shakespeare Company program for The Balcony, p. 4.

²⁵Jean Cocteau, Transition Magazine, 1949, quoted in Royal Shakespeare Company program for The Balcony, p. 5.

²⁶Violette Leduc, Mad in Pursuit, 1971, quoted in Royal Shakespeare Company program for The Balcony, p. 7.

arouse his audience to an emotional frenzy so that they will instinctively reject the inverted world he has created, a disintegrating social structure, and replace the need for belief by causing the manifestation of man's primitive and archetypal emotions.²⁷ In this director's analysis, Genet's purpose in theatre is congruous to that advocated by Antonin Artaud, and those remaining elements which classify Genet as an Absurdist are merely those elements advocated by Artaud's Theatre of Cruelty:

--the abandonment of the concepts of character and motivation; the concentration on states of mind and basic human situations, rather than on the development of a narrative plot from exposition to solution; the devaluation of language as a means of communication and understanding; and the confrontation of the spectator with the harsh facts of a cruel world and his own isolation--²⁸

Artaud's Theory of Cruelty states, "The erotic desire is Cruelty because it burns of necessity; Death is Cruelty, the Resurrection is Cruelty, Transfiguration is Cruelty."²⁹ Artaud, influenced by Nietzsche, believed these elements of Cruelty to be common archetypes of all men and that society had repressed these into the collective unconscious universal to all mankind. He therefore sought a theatre capable of shocking an audience into a metaphysical state where the elements of Cruelty would become manifest not only as personal, but as parts of the collective unconscious.³⁰ He sought to create in the audience the same feeling of

²⁷Brustein, The Theatre of Revolt, pp. 390-391.

²⁸Esslin, The Theatre of the Absurd, p. 197.

²⁹Martin Esslin, Reflections (Garden City, New York: Doubleday and Company, Inc., 1969), p. 169.

³⁰Jacques Guicharnaud, Modern French Theatre (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1967), pp. 228-230.

frenzy which evolved from the Plague, believing both theatre and the Plague to be the time and triumph of evil, evil being the fault of life, and both to be a process of purification as the mask of life falls and reveals the baseness and hypocrisy of civilization.³¹ He discovered Balinese rituals and incantations to evoke a response similar to the communal response he desired in theatre, and then delved into the concepts of that from which drama evolved, the dithyrambic rites with their subjugation of man to the hostile powers of the universe.³²

Artaud felt that form had no relevance, being confined and contemporary to each age of man. Therefore, the approach advocated by Artaud was to discern the theme of the play and the techniques utilized in its presentation. The first step in production was for the metteur en scene (a combination of producer, director and author) to get to the core of emotion (archetypal in meaning) of the script and through theatrical technique to achieve an interpenetration of the action and the audience with this core. The action is to be carried on, in or around the audience, and the selection of theatrical devices such as music, lights, color, masks, and rhythmical movement of body and voice are to be used in relation to their symbolic significance. This selection process applies also to the development of characters. Artaud felt that characters should be denied their psychological and sociological development to be revealed rather as the truth of man's subjugation to a cancerous fate. These characters are to be dream-like rather than real, for

³¹Ibid., p. 228.

³²Wellwarth, The Theatre of Protest and Paradox, p. 19.

he felt that men see themselves in dreams and may understand and unite when exposed to the purity of the collective unconscious.³³

These characters, who would be in union with man in his collective unconscious, must express their most essential core to connote meaning for the audience. Therefore, the language does not lie in the power of the words of whatever poetry is selected, as Artaud felt words to be merely an attempt to reduce the unknown to the known, rather language is to reveal the "poetry behind the poetry." This could only be transmitted through the symbolic gestures of posture, body rhythms and sound patterns.³⁴ If words are used, it must be in form of incantations of mystery and shock which allows for the consistency of the metaphysical and trance-like state being shared with the audience.

The extension, abstraction, concentration and juxtaposition of all the elements to their outer most limits creates a difficulty in the analytical understanding of the spectator, thereby causing him to be more openly accessible to instinctive human emotion as he is shattered by experiencing the helplessness of the human situation.³⁵ With Theatre of Cruelty each spectator becomes one with the "poetry of space" in sharing the union of man's most archetypal being. Through this understanding he has the capabilities to change life rather than be consumed by it.³⁶

³³Antonin Artaud, The Theatre and its Double, trans. by Mary Caroline Richards (New York: Grove Press, Inc., 1968), p. 86.

³⁴Bettina Knapp, "Antonin Artaud's Revolutionary Theatre of Cruelty," Today's Speech, XVII (Number 3), p. 27.

³⁵Wellwarth, The Theatre of Protest and Paradox, p. 17.

³⁶Esslin, Reflections, p. 169.

Therefore, in this director's opinion, Genet is not a playwright in the Absurdist tradition, but rather one of the only living playwrights in the tradition of Artaud. Genet himself, unknowingly, as he read little of Artaud, advocates this form of theatre:

What I have been told about the Japanese, Chinese and Balinese revels and the perhaps magnified ideas that persist in my brain make the formula of the Western theatre seem to me too coarse. One can only dream of an art that would be a profound web of active symbols capable of speaking to the audience a language in which nothing is said . . . For even the finest of Western plays have something shoddy about them, an air of masquerade and not of ceremony.³⁷

Genet's quest in life as a man is also analogous to the aspirations of the Theatre of Cruelty, to purge:

Man is controlled from birth to death by blind and merciless forces. At the same time drama should be a defiance of these forces, no matter how ineffectual such defiance is doomed to be, and a protest against the encroachment of civilization upon man's naturally free spirit.³⁸

Genet was a thief to satisfy his instinctual appetites and turned to drama as the method by which to purge himself of evil in his quest for "saintliness," defined basically as achieving the recognition of evil. Genet's theatre is merely the literary form of the man, and so his theatre in turn is an attempt to aid the spectator in the recognition of evil. Sartre maintains that, "by infecting us with evil, Genet delivers us from it."³⁹ Genet's theatre is therefore a "drama of transformation--the

³⁷Jean Genet, "A Note on Theatre," trans. by Bernard Frechtman, in Genet/Ionesco: The Theatre of the Double, ed. by Kelly Morris (New York: Bantam Books, Inc., 1969), p. 19.

³⁸Wellwarth, The Theatre of Protest and Paradox, p. 147.

³⁹Brustein, The Theatre of Revolt, p. 390.

metamorphosis of one act into another,"⁴⁰ as he transforms evil into ceremonious acts and sacred gestures.

In the style of Artaud, the only way to achieve this drama of transformation is through developing ritual actions, similar to the theatre of myth and mystery of the most primitive of men, "capable of expressing the deepest emotion about the most profound psychic contents and archtypes through which actors and audience can merge in a collective act of communication at the very deepest level."⁴¹

Specifically, one ritual action of myth utilized by Genet is analogous to Artaud's concept of the Plague. The Plague for Artaud was hypnotic and in its sudden attack and resulting frenzy allowed for man's communion with nature, "striking not at the brain but at the core of the human soul."⁴² The Revolt for Genet is the representative action accruing from man's myth in his need for illusion. The Revolt is resultant of man's "cravings, good or evil, that he can find no other means to satisfy."⁴³ The Revolt is, therefore, an innate response of all men, representative of the "incurable yearning of the human race to be something other than itself."⁴⁴

Man's search for metamorphosis is most achieved through purgation, therefore Genet professes the theatre of communion to achieve purgation. For Genet, the modern prototype of the primitive and communal theatre in

⁴⁰Ibid., p. 390.

⁴¹Esslin, Reflections, p. 220.

⁴²Wellwarth, The Theatre of Protest and Paradox, p. 150.

⁴³Review for The Balcony, The London Times, April 23, 1957.

⁴⁴Wellwarth, The Theatre of Protest and Paradox, p. 135.

the modern world is "that celebration which for the past two thousand years has reconstituted, in symbolic terms, the end of a supper: the Mass,"⁴⁵ a drama of transformation. He relates that, "Theatrically speaking, I know of nothing more effective than the elevation of the host."⁴⁶ Therefore, his model for the theatre is the Mass, yet Genet inverts the sacred good of the Mass through theatre to be his sacred evil. Sartre explains it as a Black Mass, "through which the playwright evokes not God, but himself."⁴⁷ And to achieve communion, Genet utilizes the elements of the Christian Mass in his drama: ritual, symbol, gesture, and metaphoric characters.⁴⁸

In this director's opinion, Genet as a Western man writing for the Western theatre utilizes the dramatic construct of a structured plot in order to reach the myths innate to man. This structured form is the only means by which the Western audience could grasp any meaning in the collective unconscious. The Balcony is set in Genet's world of evil, in some messianic world of dark regions, where "there's no possibility of doing evil"⁴⁹ as "one cannot commit evil in evil."⁵⁰ And, Genet has chosen the image of a whorehouse, a despicable concept for modern morality, to equivocate the fact that society is a whorehouse and that in our

⁴⁵ Leonard Cabell Pronko, Avant-Garde: The Experimental Theatre in France (Berkeley, California: University of California Press, 1962), p. 141.

⁴⁶ Brustein, The Theatre of Revolt, p. 379.

⁴⁷ Ibid., p. 390.

⁴⁸ Pronko, Avant-Garde: The Experimental Theatre in France, p. 140.

⁴⁹ Jean Genet, The Balcony, trans. by Bernard Frechtman, Revised ed. (New York: Grove Press, Inc., 1966), p. 10.

⁵⁰ Ibid., p. 20.

world of Good we advocate the same human activities, such as the quest for power and the quest to be something quite other than what we are, as do the characters in The Balcony. We are therefore no different from them and we, too, are as evil.

In all of Genet's plays there exists a balcony. Genet perceives this physical structure in our world of Good as the place from which high dignitaries greet society. He has entitled his whorehouse "The Grand Balcony" as here men may be greeted as high dignitaries by mirror reflections. And then, he goes further to use the actual structural balcony of the whorehouse to have unreal dignitaries greeted by society, and become real for the society simply because they are on a balcony and look like dignitaries should look. Yet it is not in this form alone that he is in actuality desecrating society. He also has "The Grand Balcony" be sanctioned by the state, for it is here that men may achieve their fantasies without being a threat to the real society, and it is here as well that society is kept intact as it is continually being reinforced as all powerful simply because men are adoring the powers of the church, the magistracy, and the army, the basic components of any society of any era--political, sociological, economic, and religious.

Outside "The Balcony" rages a revolution which has separated the brothel from the rest of the city, causing it to be a place of security and rapture for those, who in the threat of death, wish to act out their fantasies so as not to die without self-recognition. The first scene directly introduces the audience to both the ritual action of play and the concept of the Mass, both visually, with the garbed Bishop, and mentally, as we see his need to carry on his scenario over and over again

in order to gain rapture and satisfaction. The second scene begins and ends with a fake thief, "Not yet lick it, lick it,"⁵¹ to isolate the action of the scene as a repeating entity within itself. Here we have The Judge, a man who has found the need for both thieves and executioners to exist in order for the function of a judge to have necessity. The third scene introduces an expose as to how the scenarios of the brothel are arranged as a man enters in his working clothes and "real" character and builds both physically and psychologically into The General. The fourth scene introduces another type of ageless strata as a man desires to become The Beggar.

The first four scenes introduce the basic themes of The Balcony: Man in his need for Illusion; Man in his fear of Death; Function as opposed to Image; the necessity of Evil for Good to exist. After the initial shock Genet offers the audience, tricking the eye and ear into perceiving the illusion of a real Bishop, these first scenes expose the function of the brothel which is to aid man in his quest for illusion.

The fifth scene exposes the business function in the workings of the brothel, primarily the desire of the proprietress, Madame Irma, to protect "The Balcony" from the threat of the revolution. Yet, here Genet displays that the only reason Irma desires this is so that she can maintain her illusions of another ageless image, The Mistress of a Whorehouse. Her workers also have their ageless illusions exemplified by Carmen as The Mother, The Immaculate Conception, and Arthur as The Pimp. Also introduced is The Chief of Police, the protector of the brothel just as he is the protector of state, as "The Balcony" is where the great figures

⁵¹Ibid., pp. 14, 20.

of society are immortalized, though only through artifice. He, too, has a function, that of quelling the revolution, but he wants to fulfill this only so that he will be of great enough stature to be immortalized in image in Irma's "House of Illusions."

The sixth scene takes place outside "The Balcony" with the revolutionaries. Their purpose is to destroy the artifice of society through not only killing the real hierarchy, but the brothel itself which allows the concepts of society to be immortalized. However, they in turn seem to be desiring illusion in the desire to be destroying illusions. Not even they know what they are fighting for except the image of ageless figures, Revolutionaries.

In scene seven Genet introduces another figure, The Court Envoy who comes to Madame Irma with news that the real hierarchy of society has been destroyed. In his manipulative method of compelling both The Chief of Police and Irma into thinking they are gaining some reality, as their reality will only be real for them by attaining a powerful image which is in turn unreal, Genet again tricks the audience in this sequence as he introduces another level of reality; is The Court Envoy real, or is he simply in Madame Irma's brothel in order to gain satisfaction through instigating a struggle for power? The Envoy convinces Irma to pose as The Queen for society and to have her clientele of The Bishop, The Judge, The General, and The Beggar appear with her in the images of the hierarchy that has been destroyed by The Revolutionaries.

The most shocking attack Genet makes on society is when the unreal Great Figures pose on the balcony of the whorehouse and are accepted in image by society. From the image of society being the mirror of men, the

unreal characters accept their image as having function behind image and in scene nine they attempt to gain the functional power of their new self-perception.

In scene nine the attempts of The Great Figures to gain functional power are at first reinforced through The Photographers who are taking picture images of the character images. Genet as well is going one step further in exposing society's acceptance of image as opposed to understanding function. However, when The Chief of Police enters, the fight for power begins, aided by encouraging remarks from The Envoy. The Chief of Police has allowed The Great Figures to have reality for the populace simply so he in reality could be backed by enough "image power" to quell the revolution. However, he does not feel that his image is great enough as it has not been immortalized, as all Great Figures are, in "The Grand Balcony." He does exert his real power over The Great Figures, but they are not in reality real, and so his power is truly meaningless. But then a client enters to "abolish himself"⁵² in the fascinating image of The Chief of Police. Ironically it is Roger, the one revolutionary who saw through the sham of the revolution, who now has no reality as there is no longer a Revolution for which to fight and no longer Chantal to love. In his attempt to attain the reality of an image of some significance, he realizes that his only reality is in unreality (being The Chief of Police) and in an attempt to destroy the phallic power of The Chief of Police, castrates himself in attempting to return to his fantasy of being The Chief of Police.

⁵²Ibid., p. 77.

Although startled at first, The Chief of Police has gained the stature of image he desired; he therefore no longer has to be all powerful and may be "kind . . . and pious . . . and just"⁵³ and may "wait out the regulation two thousand years"⁵⁴ to be a figure of ageless stature. The Great Figures have now lost any hope for power as they no longer have any real person over whom to have power. The Envoy and Irma remain. The Envoy, in this director's opinion, has succeeded in attaining reality in the unreality as his manipulation of the struggle for power leaves him intact and also exposes the possibility that perhaps the whole play has merely been a scenario for him to gain satisfaction. When he exits, Irma remains alone, and it appears that she has been accomplice to the total masquerade. In utter realism she attacks the audience and suggests that they themselves have conceived this in their imaginations as objective viewers of a struggle for power to attain their ultimate power.

In this director's opinion, the legitimacy of the ritual and archetypal approach she will utilize in production is found in The Envoy's line, "someone dreaming, Madame . . ."⁵⁵ According to Artaud's concepts, man is at reality with the collective unconscious in his dreams, and in his dreams perceives the essence of the image of characters, situations, actions, sounds, symbols, and environments and magnifies them to the point of the grotesque. In this director's opinion, essence is maintained through ritual and repetition, therefore The Balcony is to be approached through essences as it is a continual repetition of man trying

⁵³Ibid., p. 94.

⁵⁴Ibid., p. 79.

⁵⁵Ibid., p. 95.

to attain image, man in his fear of death, man in his quest for power, and man's attempt to attain reality.

Character Analysis

The essences of the human quests in life that are to be repeated in ritual form are exemplary of the elements continually found in the universal collective unconscious. These elements are designated as archetypes and are believed to be inherent in all men. Therefore, in analyzing and projecting the characters of The Balcony, this director will use what she calls an "archetypal approach." It is her concern to determine those essences of character according to each universal archetype so that each image will be in communion with the collective unconscious of the audience members. The director arrived at this approach from her analysis of Artaud's metaphoric characters in the Theatre of Cruelty, and from a concept derived by Peter Brook in his book The Empty Space. Brook speaks of using a "child's eyes" approach which is visually best exemplified by the paintings of Marc Chagall. Every object and image in Chagall's paintings is abstracted to the point of purity, of essence as if seen through the eyes of a child.⁵⁶ In the director's analysis, her approach is valid for The Balcony on two counts: first, utilizing the dream approach, she feels that in dreams man is in his collective unconscious and that he imagines in this purity; second, she believes that each character in the play is exemplary of Genet who she discerns to have the purity of perception of a child. Analogous to the

⁵⁶Peter Brook, The Empty Space (New York: Antheneum Publishers, 1968), pp. 61, 70.

of the Theatre of Cruelty, each character is not only metaphoric but, through the essence, is symbolic. This director's approach to each character and each actor portraying that character will be to aid in the discernment of a reality for the actor in relation to their perception through "child's eyes" of the character they are to portray. In accomplishing this approach, this director will first approach the reality of the character through finding images, adjectives, essences, and then allow each actor to magnify these elements to the point of the grotesque so as to have the reality underneath the symbolism of the larger than life characters.

Two other concepts that are influential in this director's approach to the characters are from Peter Zadek and Jean-Paul Sartre. Zadek, who first directed The Balcony in 1957, determines that there must a "Grock" in every role;⁵⁷ a "Grock" being someone who is ultimately perceptive to the very essence of their being and additionally perceptive to the point of metaphysical transcendence.⁵⁸ Sartre dictates that with Genet "every character must play the part of a character playing a role."⁵⁹ This director has therefore found it mandatory to determine not only a character subtext beneath all the levels and games of reality, but an actor subtext as well. The actor subtext should be coercive and universal with the character subtext, as both are representative of man

⁵⁷Peter Zadek, quoted in Royal Shakespeare Company program for The Balcony, p. 6.

⁵⁸Robert A. Heinlein, Stranger in a Strange Land (New York: Berkley Publishing Company, 1961), pp. 9-414.

⁵⁹Jean-Paul Sartre, "Introduction," to The Maids, by Jean Genet, trans. by Bernard Frechtman (New York: Grove Press, Inc., 1961), p. 16.

relating to the collective unconscious. To define the archetypal essences of the collective unconscious, ritual action will be employed. In The Balcony, the primary impetus for defining ritual actions accrues from the sado-masochistic tendencies innate to man. The actors must, therefore, relate and analyze on a sexually physical and mental level by alternating sadism and masochism which, in this director's opinion, is equivocal to the ritual action of the play itself and man's quest for power. In essence, both quests, sex and power, accrue from the ritual born of the conflict of domination and submission.

The Three Great Figures

The Three Great Figures of The Bishop, The Judge, and The General are equal in their very human quest for illusion when they enter into the brothel as very simple men. They are each in need of finding reality through attaining their illusions. However, they are unreal as their only reality is in unreality, seeing themselves as images through mirrors. They are also in need of another unreal character, that is The Whores dressed up as counterpart to their imaginary functions. However, The Whores must be whores so that the reality of the question of function never becomes real. When The Great Figures step out onto the balcony of the brothel, they attain another level of unreality; they no longer have their mirrors and society is their only mirror. When society accepts them, they attain another level of unreality as they then accept themselves as being real and decide to actually perform their functions. Like Genet, each of these characters is in a quest for "saintliness," being able to discern Evil from Good (and for them there

is no possibility of doing Evil because they are in the Evil of the brothel), and the attainment of legend for themselves by becoming powerful figures.

The Bishop

The essence of the image of a Bishop is not only in his physical costume, but in his omniscience, with God speaking through his voice, of total power of total control. A mere gasman has come to "The Balcony" to become a Bishop. Why? Irma states it: ". . . to seek by quick decisive ways a manifest saintliness . . . It wasn't mere gross ambition that brought you behind my closed shutters. Love of God was hidden there."⁶⁰ Therefore, there is a reality of feeling behind the desire for power. Nowhere but in Madame Irma's "House of Illusions" could a lowly man fulfill his desire for "saintliness" through a purely devout attempt at being something which he is not. However, the previously mentioned essence of "omniscience" is also a character element of the gasman and Genet brilliantly gives even the character of the gasman the quality of metaphysical transcendence in his dialogue. When The Great Figures do desire power, it is primarily through The Bishop that they speak, for the word of God, through the mouth of The Bishop, is ultimate. In this director's opinion, the desire for the attainment of piety is in this case not blasphemous, but rather an honesty of desire felt by all men in their quest for "saintliness." The gasman does want The Penitane whore to commit evil sins, but only so that he may forgive them as The Bishop and fulfill an imaginary function.

⁶⁰ Genet, The Balcony, p. 84.

The Penitent

It is necessary to analyze The Penitent whore with The Bishop, as her presence is essential for the gasman to become The Bishop. She confesses to committing sins, but only so The Bishop may attain "saintliness" in his fantasy. In actuality she has not committed any sins, because if she did and The Bishop forgives her, he would become a real Bishop in function. However, her purpose in participating in the rituals is the same as the rest of Madame Irma's "long, sterile girls,"⁶¹ to taunt, tease, and frustrate the clients to satisfy their own sadistic and masochistic compulsions.

The Judge

The essence of The Judge lies only in his ability to discern Good from Evil. Therefore, for the banker who desires to become The Judge, there must be present both Good and Evil. The Evil is his whore, The Thief, who must continually "Plead not guilty"⁶² so that he may make her confess to being guilty. However, to fulfill his imaginary function he must also punish the Evil and make the Evil admit to committing Evil. It is therefore mandatory for him to have present The Executioner who can physically make Good out of Evil by whipping the Evil.

Though, as Irma realizes, The Judge's fantasy is "guided by a concern for justice,"⁶³ the scene with The Judge, The Executioner, and

⁶¹Ibid., p. 31.

⁶²Ibid., p. 15.

⁶³Ibid., p. 84.

The Thief is the highpoint of pending physical sadism and masochism. The Judge, in actuality, wants The Thief not to confess so that he may get masochistic pleasure out of having to beg and lick her feet to make her confess and so that The Executioner will threaten him with the whip. He gets sadistic pleasure from having The Executioner beg to whip The Thief and from having The Thief whipped.

The Thief

The Thief whore is new to Madame Irma's brothel, yet accepts with much pleasure her sadistic and masochistic role. She is in earnest to fulfill her role as best she can, though is perhaps a bit tired of being whipped. However, the sadistic and hedonistic pleasure she gets from having The Judge beg for her confession and lick her boot may only derive from the cyclic ritual of sadism and masochism. She therefore accepts the whipping as an integral part of sadistic power in which she delights.

The Executioner

The Executioner is actually another one of Madame Irma's whores, although she allows him to think of himself in his illusion of Arthur The Pimp. He is one of Irma's toys for fulfilling her sadistic and masochistic desires and allows him to play the totally virile strong man role of The Executioner only so that she may delight in making him into a simpering dependent with greater relish. As The Executioner, Arthur feels almost totally in control as he is the physical power which The Judge does not have. He gets his sadistic pleasure not only from his sense of power, but also from whipping The Thief, threatening The Judge, and being

an almost homosexual fantasy for The Judge. His masochistic pleasure derives from having to beg to whip The Thief.

The General

The man who desires to become The General in Madame Irma's "House of Illusions" is one who has made mental analysis in his life, but desires to fulfill his fantasy by having had fulfilled heroic military strategy: "it was bravery and military glory and the heroic deed that haunted"⁶⁴ him. As The General he can fantasize having been a hero and may go to his grave in a blaze of glory. Like the image of a real general, he is quite proper and demands total organization of not only his paraphernalia but the exact sequence of his scenario. As a real man he is like the image of The General in being authoritative and discreet. For this reason his scenario accomplice is to be not a human, as a human whore would be quite improper, but rather more of a pal, a comrade horse who has suffered and won with him. The General is more masochistic than sadistic. He loves the frustrations Irma offers as she, without propriety, begins to call him "General," as well as those The Pony creates when she taunts and tantalizes him.

The Pony Girl

The Pony Girl whore is the integral character in allowing the client to become The General. She is a well accomplished and skillful whore and is totally self-indulgent when she works The General's scenario. Her concerns are not primarily for him, but rather for herself, and she

⁶⁴ Ibid., p. 84.

utilizes her body and her mind to their utmost limit, while remaining totally objective to her own passions, to tantalize The General. She will often knowingly get carried away in order to fulfill a sadistic pleasure gained from pushing The General a little further in his orgiastic development than he wishes at the moment.

Irma

Irma's relationships with the clients in scenes one and three expose her as a functionary Mistress of a Brothel, concerned about the business dealings of her work, and yet a bit sadistic in her teasing and tantalizing. She is perturbed with The Bishop who deviates from the strictly scheduled session, and more congenial with The General who has more than likely been an excellent client as well as lending a greater respect to the house because of his dignified personage. However, when Irma is found in her private quarters, it is found that she is "honest enough to be herself a victim to some of the illusions she trades to the world at large."⁶⁵ She is totally sincere in being a functional character, and yet it is discovered that she does this in order to satisfy her fantasy of being "the keeper of a bawdy-house."⁶⁶ From this concept evolves her masculinity. She is a character directly out of Genet's life, a woman of the world, a woman who is a whore so as to gain domination over the men to whom she gives pleasure. This domination is her masculinity. The term of "lesbian" is often bestowed upon this character, however, in this director's opinion, she is not truly a lesbian, but

⁶⁵Review for The Balcony, Manchester Guardian, April 23, 1957.

⁶⁶Genet, The Balcony, p. 37.

rather a dominant person who wants to play for her own power. When she approaches Carmen, it is through her illusions of herself as this dominant being and this aids in fulfilling her fantasy: "Every madam, traditionally, has a slight partiality for one of her girls. . . ."⁶⁷

Irma wants to fight for this domination, while continually calculating control over every situation. She treats Carmen as a child, letting Carmen herself get carried away with her illusions, and yet continually pulling her back to reality in a sadistic ritual to gain domination power. Arthur, being a "woman" in his true strength of character, is no great challenge for which to fight to gain power. Carmen, however, gets so carried away in the subjectivity of her illusions that Irma has to knock harder to pull her to reality and therefore gains greater pleasure in satisfying her fantasy.

Irma's relationship with The Chief of Police is quite different. Perhaps there was a time when she loved him. But that would only have been one isolated instance: "I'd give my kingdom to relive a single one of them! And you know which one."⁶⁸ Her entire reason for yearning for The Chief of Police is merely an attempt at finding some reality in herself as a woman. However, The Chief of Police is impotent and she can no longer prove herself to be a woman both physically and mentally, and since they are basically mental peers, she reverts to a ritual approach with him so they can find pleasure in a sadistic and masochistic relationship. This is best exemplified when she attacks The Chief of Police's sterility and embarrasses him by reminding him of how she would

⁶⁷Ibid., p. 37.

⁶⁸Ibid., p. 52.

give him sexual pleasure from mirror reflections of her physical indulgences with Arthur. At this point the masochistic pleasure of The Chief of Police wells to the point of his committing a physical sadistic attack on Irma, and his slap, in turn, allows Irma the masochistic pleasure she desires.

Irma continually speaks of her jewels as being her only reality, and yet this reality is the same as the reality of The Bishop's with his gold and glitter. When The Envoy coaxes her to become The Queen, she is finding another reality for herself. The concept of Irma as The Queen naturally accrues from the concept of Irma as The Mistress of a House of Illusions. Irma is the modern archetypal name for a brothel proprietress, and Irma is a derivation from the word "ermine" the symbolic garb of a queen. Just as Irma is The Queen of the society of the whorehouse, Irma is The Queen of the whorehouse society.

And yet, as the unreality of the hierarchy progresses and each Great Figure begins a functional quest for power, it is revealed that Irma perhaps has the ultimate power. She has chosen to accept her role as Queen and allow her clientele to become the image of the hierarchy for society in order to aid The Chief of Police in his quest for power. However, she knows that his image will not become great enough to warrant his being "elevated to the liturgies of the brothel"⁶⁹ and that because of this, she can control him in his desire for the reality of being impersonated. However, when a client comes to be The Chief of Police, she convinces George that she has arranged it for his pleasure. But when The Chief of Police leaves to enter the Mausoleum to "sit and wait for

⁶⁹Ibid., p. 47.

two thousand years,"⁷⁰ she is left with no threat to her power. She remains "alone, mistress and assistant mistress"⁷¹ of the whorehouse and of herself. She is The Queen of the whorehouse and The Mistress of society.

Carmen

Carmen has been chosen by Irma as her "purist jewel"⁷² simply because of her subjectivity in her illusions which allows Irma to toy in her sadistic and masochistic ritual for domination. Carmen has become well rehearsed in the rituals as well and therefore experiences her own sadistic and masochistic pleasures. She is overly friendly with The Chief of Police which allows her sadistic pleasure as Irma wallows in masochistic satisfaction which also allows for sadistic pleasure for The Chief of Police.

Carmen's fantasy is that of being The Immaculate Conception, the ultimate image of motherhood, which is analogous to her image of herself as a mother needed by her daughter. Ironically, this illusion is one of purity, a quality quite incongruous for a whore. However, this purity is true in the essence of Irma being the mother protector image for Carmen who is her child. This point is also revalidated as Carmen continually brings up her father and his desires for her daughter, but never mentions a mother.

When Carmen ushers Roger into the Mausoleum studio, she is fulfilling her role for this scenario and building up Roger's self-esteem

⁷⁰Ibid., p. 94.

⁷¹Ibid., p. 95.

⁷²Ibid., p. 39.

as The Chief of Police. She performs her role well and prides herself on being one of the best of Madame Irma's girls. However, when Roger begins to find the reality of the unreality of his role and refuses to leave as is functionally expected of the clients, Carmen bursts out in her greatest reality. She realizes her function and the responsibility of her job, stating, "That's right. In ordinary language, we're called whores,"⁷³ and thus attains her reality. She remains existent with Irma at the end of the play. Though not on stage, she is mentioned by Irma in a functional capacity: "Carmen? . . . Bolt the doors, my dear, and put the furniture-covers on. . . ." ⁷⁴ and will continue, as does Irma, a participant in a continual masquerade.

The Chief of Police

George, The Chief of Police, is the hierarchic figure for Genet of the modern totalitarian state. He is in dire need to find his fantasy in his own image and feels he must gain the image of power equal to the two-thousand year old images of power: the church, the magistracy, the army, and royalty. For Genet, this is a common fallacy of modern man in his quest for "saintliness," and through The Chief of Police, Genet examines "the nature of power and how it depends upon the element of fantasy in man's imagination."⁷⁵

In this director's analysis, the quest for power by the Chief of Police is resultant of his sexual impotence. He has, therefore,

⁷³Ibid., p. 92.

⁷⁴Ibid., p. 95.

⁷⁵W. A. Darlington, Review for The Balcony, The Daily Times, April 23, 1957.

found phallic imagery in the potency of power and can attain a manliness in this quest. He has his functions, those of killing and killing and killing, and is distressed that his functions have not yet allowed his image to become of great enough stature. He is the protector of "The Balcony" simply because it is in the whorehouse alone that he may gain satisfaction of his image, but only if he is impersonated. It is this impersonation alone that he wishes to attain. However, he also indulges in sado-masochistic rituals as a building block convincing him that he may be worthy of power. These rituals are not only taking place with his killing revolutionaries, but inside the brothel as well, Irma being his greatest partner.

When The Revolutionaries have killed the real hierarchy, The Chief of Police is compelled to allow the mock dignitaries to appear in order to retain the real power for himself. The conflict arises when the mock dignitaries begin to exert power over the real Chief of Police. However, his physical and mental breakdown of their power in reality means only that he has power only over images. He aspires "saintliness," only he would not be satisfied with such a lowly title; it is rather a deification that is his ultimate goal. He desires to be the power over God's functionaries and there an equivocation with God. Merely a phallic representation would no longer be suitable; it is too human.

When Roger enters and impersonates The Chief of Police, the deification has begun. However, Roger, in the image of The Chief of Police, castrates himself. George is for a moment fearful, yet he remains "intact"⁷⁶ and the ritual performed by Roger is merely equal to

⁷⁶Genet, The Balcony, p. 94.

the ritual mutilation of all great Man-God figures, Dionysus, Osiris and Christ.⁷⁷ No longer finding the need to create his image, The Chief of Police may now find his reality of being "kind . . . and pious . . . and just,"⁷⁸ while waiting out the two-thousand years when he shall be to future men what the two-thousand year old Christ is to modern man.

Chantal

Chantal was one of Irma's whores who, failing to find the total subjectivity to fulfill her own illusions, has escaped from the brothel to become at first the image of a traitor and therefore a hero for The Revolutionaries. This stature causes her to become the person of great enough stature to symbolize the revolution, and sing for justice. She, as well as the other Revolutionaries, has lost sight of what the revolution is for, but she is in search of fulfilling her new fantasy of the image for which to fight. She loved Roger at one time and this passion is what first involved her in the revolt. But the love of Roger could not fulfill her; she must be loved and adored by everyone. Ironically, this desire causes her to be a traitor to The Revolutionaries as well. This dual role results in her death as she is shot, either by The Bishop to make her a saint of the state, or by The Revolutionaries to make her a martyr for their cause. Whichever the case, Genet leaves up to the audience, but Chantal, in attaining a reality of her quest for an image, has caused her own annihilation. This director believes that it is through this character that Genet totally examines man in his search

⁷⁷Brustein, Seasons of Discontent, p. 35.

⁷⁸Genet, The Balcony, p. 94.

for grandiose image, playing contradicting roles which can only end in self-destruction.

Roger

Genet modelled the revolution in The Balcony after the French Revolution and Roger is patterned after Robespierre who "began by despising artifice before developing his own ceremonies."⁷⁹ However, Genet then generalizes the revolt to include most revolutions of modern history in their quest for reason and virtue.

The Revolutionaries are fighting against the images of society in an effort to desecrate these images and expose them as being merely artifice. This quest is valid; however, The Revolutionaries have become so carried away in their plight that they too are fighting to be merely images, those of Revolutionaries, and Chantal has become the image for which they are fighting.

Roger alone realizes the irony: "The fight is no longer taking place in reality, but in the lists. Field azure. It's the combat of allegories. We no longer know ourselves why we revolted. So she [Chantal] had to come to this."⁸⁰ And yet even with this realization, he continues the fight, his now being a fight for Reason and Virtue, images within themselves.

With Chantal's death and therefore the ultimate disintegration of the revolution, Roger is left with no image of himself; he can no longer be a Revolutionary and he can no longer find reality in being loved by

⁷⁹Brustein, The Theatre of Revolt, p. 398.

⁸⁰Genet, The Balcony, p. 57.

Chantal. In an attempt to find reality he goes to "The Balcony" where he abolishes himself in an image, ironically attaining only unreality. He chooses to act out his fantasy in the guise of The Chief of Police, his archenemy, and the causal factor of Roger's lack of reality; The Chief of Police has destroyed The Revolution and in so doing, Chantal was annihilated. At first Roger desires to attain the power of The Chief of Police, but he realizes, as does no other character in The Balcony, that reality is only achieved in unreality and that reality is therefore not real. This concept is exposed as Roger, in the unreal image of The Chief of Police, thinks of the unreal image of The Slave whose words alone allow Roger any reality: "What does it matter, since I'm no longer to have any reality except in the reality of your phrases?"⁸¹ However, Roger is able to pull himself back into his fantasy until the physical element of real time, the session being over, causes him to be shocked into the realization of himself, and that he has nothing. He then forces himself back into his fantasy and commits the "ultimate gesture of hate against the abstraction he is personifying"⁸² and makes Genet's ultimate affirmation of falsity.

The Slave

The Slave is actually another client of Madame Irma's who enters "The Balcony" to act out his fantasy. Though not of great stature, the image of The Slave and The Beggar is one of ageless existence and a quest for understanding the poor and weak could provoke a person to experience

⁸¹Ibid., p. 91.

⁸²Wellwarth, The Theatre of Protest and Paradox, p. 139.

such existence through image and fantasy, a much more pleasant approach than accepting the reality of this social level.

The Photographers

The Photographers in The Balcony are interested in themselves as fulfilling the function and image of being photographers, which is ironically the function of "feeding the masses with the pap of symbolism."⁸³ They are merely falsifiers of reality, or the falsifiers of unreality, or the verifiers of unreality, or perhaps Genet is saying the verifiers of reality. Nonetheless, their creating "a true image born of a false spectacle"⁸⁴ merely reinforces Genet's major theme of man's need for illusion in his quest for reality.

The Envoy

In this director's opinion, The Court Envoy is the most fascinating of all the characters in The Balcony. Except for scene seven where Genet introduces us to the idea of image being the only belief for society as The Envoy perpetrates the imposture of the Great Figures, his function is diminutive and he is stark in contrast to the verbosity of the other characters. George Wellwarth likens him to "an unctuous Mephisto"⁸⁵ who is of no definite individuality, but rather composed of "pieces of the very fabric of falsehood that have become animated."⁸⁶

⁸³Ibid., p. 134.

⁸⁴Genet, The Balcony, p. 75.

⁸⁵Wellwarth, The Theatre of Protest and Paradox, p. 136.

⁸⁶Ibid., p. 136.

Genet leaves any definite interpretation of The Court Envoy to the imagination of the audience. This director believes him to be the devil and the saint Genet, both having woven fantastic dreamlike masquerades. The Envoy fulfills this in his instigation to every character to attain power. He coaxes each one without being at all obvious, appearing more like a subconscious voice within every human, like a little devil sitting on a shoulder. It is this true ultimate knowledge of man and of masquerade that allows The Envoy to remain unscathed, like an omniscient god, just as Genet, with his manipulation of the audience by carrying them through layers and layers of reality, exposes all as a joke.

Setting Analysis

The basic conceptual approach decided upon by the director and the designer is that of the Theatre of Cruelty. In the director's analysis, the most essential element of this form of theatre to explore is that of the ritual. For the director, this is an attempt to discover the central rhythm innate to man, recreate it in the production, and involve the audience through their senses so as to achieve the communal awareness of a total theatre experience.

The central rhythm is, in the director's opinion, orgasmic in nature and evolves from the ritual action of the domination/submission conflict. It is also the director's belief that the social consciousness of man generally forbids his total confession or awareness of participation in this ritual, and that the heightened sensitivity of the dream experience is the only recognition of ritual man will accept. Hence, the involvement the audience should experience is analogous to the

heightened sensitivity of a dream experience. Therefore, the director and the designer will attempt to heighten the audio and visual theatrical elements of costumes, movement, lighting, sound effects, and music to the point of beauty which borders on the grotesque.

The director has stated previously in her analysis that the play should be as a dream experience which unites men in the collective unconscious of archetypal imagery. In her estimation, this unconsciousness is a negative void from which flashes of grotesque symbols and images appear. This theory of image upon image is one of a montage filmic technique advocated by Serge Eisenstein. Therefore, the director discerns the necessity for a setting which will evoke for the audience the uncertainty of a sterile void and which will allow for images to appear in succession without any solid basis except within the reality of the moment in which they are appearing.

Idealistically this director would prefer to utilize the scenic approach advocated by Artaud, that of having the action take place around and in the audience. Since the staging for this production is limited to proscenium presentation, it has been a problem for both the director and the designer to attempt to achieve this desired effect within the limitations of the staging.

The director and the designer have therefore decided upon a basic unit set in which no area would be a specific area, but rather would be utilized for the varying images of the various scenes. In the opinion of the director and the designer, the concept of the void demands that the color be negative, black, without shadows, without any perspective except for the isolated images that appear. In order to distort height

and width perspective, except for each isolated scene, the director desires the use of a multi-level set. This multi-level set will also allow for greater variation in movement through changing heights, and for the basic movements of the scenes: static and one level; man in descent; man in ascent; domination over submission.

The director believes the brothel "The Balcony" to be symbolic of society, the universe, the collective unconscious. She therefore wants to create the sense of a series of rooms in the brothel of the collective unconscious. This concept is analogous to the effect of image after image. The void should also give the sense of being infinite. For this reason Genet utilizes the concepts of mirror after mirror. Both the director and the designer agree that the use of actual mirrors, though of visual and intellectual compliment to the production, would be impractical due to the expense which would, in turn, subtract from the other visual elements such as costuming, properties, and set pieces. Therefore, the designer has decided to use shiny vertical elements, placed at varying distances, depths, and heights, to evoke this infinite effect while at the same time forbidding a true physical visual perception for the audience.

The black, or negative, void will also allow for the images and symbols of the set pieces, the costumes, the characters, the movement, and the language to appear as more vibrant, grotesque, and sumptuous in their archetypal essences. The director believes this to aid in fulfilling Genet's quest for something absolute and sacramental. He desires his plays to be staged with the solemnity and outward splendor of one of the world's greatest cathedrals."⁸⁷

⁸⁷Esslin, The Theatre of the Absurd, p. 181.

The director and the designer have decided to utilize only the most essential scenic elements per scene, those which will communicate as archetypes for the audience and evoke a visceral response. Several set pieces will be hung so as to fly in as each ritual image of the action flies in before the eye of the audience.

The director realizes, however, that while relating to the senses of the audience, it is also mandatory that the setting and the play be a stage as well, just as life is a masquerade on a stage.⁸⁸ In this director's opinion the mere physical manifestations of the essences of visual and audio elements being larger than life will convey a definite sense of a theatrical production. The director desires, by using this scenic approach, to enhance the problem she will propose for the audience: "to find the reality--if any,"⁸⁹ and expose that "appearance is all the reality there is."⁹⁰

Justification

When the director first read The Balcony in the fall of 1971, she was immediately struck by her strong reactions, both mental and physical, to Genet's structure, imagery, and language. Although she had read his one-acts several years earlier, she did not realize the scope of creative artistic interpretation Genet allows. After the first reading she could not explain what the play was about, but knew that The Balcony

⁸⁸David I. Grossvogel, Four Playwrights and a Postscript (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1962), p. 158.

⁸⁹Wellwarth, The Theatre of Protest and Paradox, p. 131.

⁹⁰Ibid.

had somehow attacked some stream of consciousness and that she wanted to learn more about both the play and Genet.

The majority of this director's personal research over the past three years has been on Nietzsche, Artaud, and Pirandello, and she found in The Balcony the theatrical implications made by these three men. And yet her main compulsion and attachment to the play came from the desire to dissect Genet after being faced with the complexity of ever being able to really understand him.

The director, after brief analysis, decided that perhaps she could help Genet affect others in the pure and honest way in which he affected her, and in so doing, fulfill her desire to understand him. She also realized that The Balcony was a play which would allow her to make a totally creative interpretation and that it was of great artistic worth for the designer she was to work with, who has unusual strength in costuming. After much deliberation, the director and the designer realized another exciting attribute for choosing this play for production, the total interdependence needed to present The Balcony as a composite theatrical experience.

Before making final commitment to the play as a thesis production, the director decided it necessary to study herself as a director and discover her attributes and weaknesses. She discerned that from her past education in dramatic theory she would be capable of justifying a valid approach to The Balcony. Also recognized was the fact that she directs more capably plays which she not only intellectually understands, but feels in her being. She also decided that since she had never directed a large cast show that she should, especially since she is intrigued with

the concepts of ensemble work and wished to discover an approach to such a method. Her past analytical knowledge of ritual theatre was extensive, however she felt a weakness in being able to practically define segments of action while retaining a continuity of the total action. Because of the variety of the numerous rituals in The Balcony, she felt that directing the play would benefit her practical approach to theatre.

But primary in this director's decision to direct The Balcony is her belief in Genet as an important, honest, and influential modern dramatist and her awareness of what she believes to be misconceptions concerning what he is saying about mankind and the human condition. She feels that Genet should be presented by one who respects and admires him so that others may benefit in a greater understanding of themselves by either viewing or breathing Genet.

Interpretation

This director feels The Balcony to be a game and a play. Within the text itself are games and plays and the production should be simply the macrocosm of the world of the play, and the theatre be a microcosm of the games and plays of the world.

Analogous to the concept of The Balcony as a play is the director's perception of the comedy of life. Walter Kerr explains the comedy of The Balcony by first stating that man has at some time in history stripped himself of all his outside layers, and in so doing lost his power to act tragically. He continues to explain that all that is serious to man, such as the concepts of the church, the magistracy, the army,

etc., is to be "perceived through a veil of irreverence"⁹¹ which, showing man as preposterous, is comic and at the same time horrifying.

We are at the center point of two pressures. Self-consciousness has driven us to illusionism. At the same time, comedy, precisely because it has been deprived of its tragic master plan, has had to descend into a blackness to impenetrable that its own identity is in question. Two lost identities meet and grapple in the dark. As tragedy turns into comedy, comedy is not quite there. And comedy is not quite there because of what tragedy has done.⁹²

In other words, we can no longer be tragic beings because of our evolutionary development, and yet man is faced with the same horrifying human conditions of the most primitive of men and is left with no means by which to purge himself of these savage fears and drives.

It is therefore this director's desire to create her production of The Balcony as a savagely comic and viscerally violent assault on the audience to allow for the cathartic and enlightening theatrical experience.

To be concise in the attempt at creating a theatrical experience, the director will attempt to make manifest those philosophical elements which, in her opinion, are most meaningful to the play. She, therefore, will delete much of what she feels is superfluous and repetitive dialogue to make the production more emphatic with a two and one-half hour length as opposed to the usual running time of three and one-half hours. She will be utilizing three scripts of The Balcony: the original French first edition, Bernard Frechtman's English translation of the first edition, and Frechtman's English translation of Genet's revised second edition, in an attempt to synthesize the most suitable and emphatic dialogue.

⁹¹Walter Kerr, Tragedy and Comedy (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1967), p. 272.

⁹²Ibid., p. 323.

To aid in relating her production of The Balcony to Genet's primary concern of man and metamorphosis, the director has analyzed previously in this paper that Genet's model in the theatre is the Christian Mass. Therefore, believing the structural unity of The Balcony to be analogous to the structural unity of the Mass, the director has requested the writing of an "Original Mass for The Balcony," to be composed by two fellow graduate students, to aid in flavoring her production with the austerity and solemnity of the liturgical she believes inherent in the play.

CHAPTER II

PROMPT BOOK FOR THE BALCONYSCENE ONE

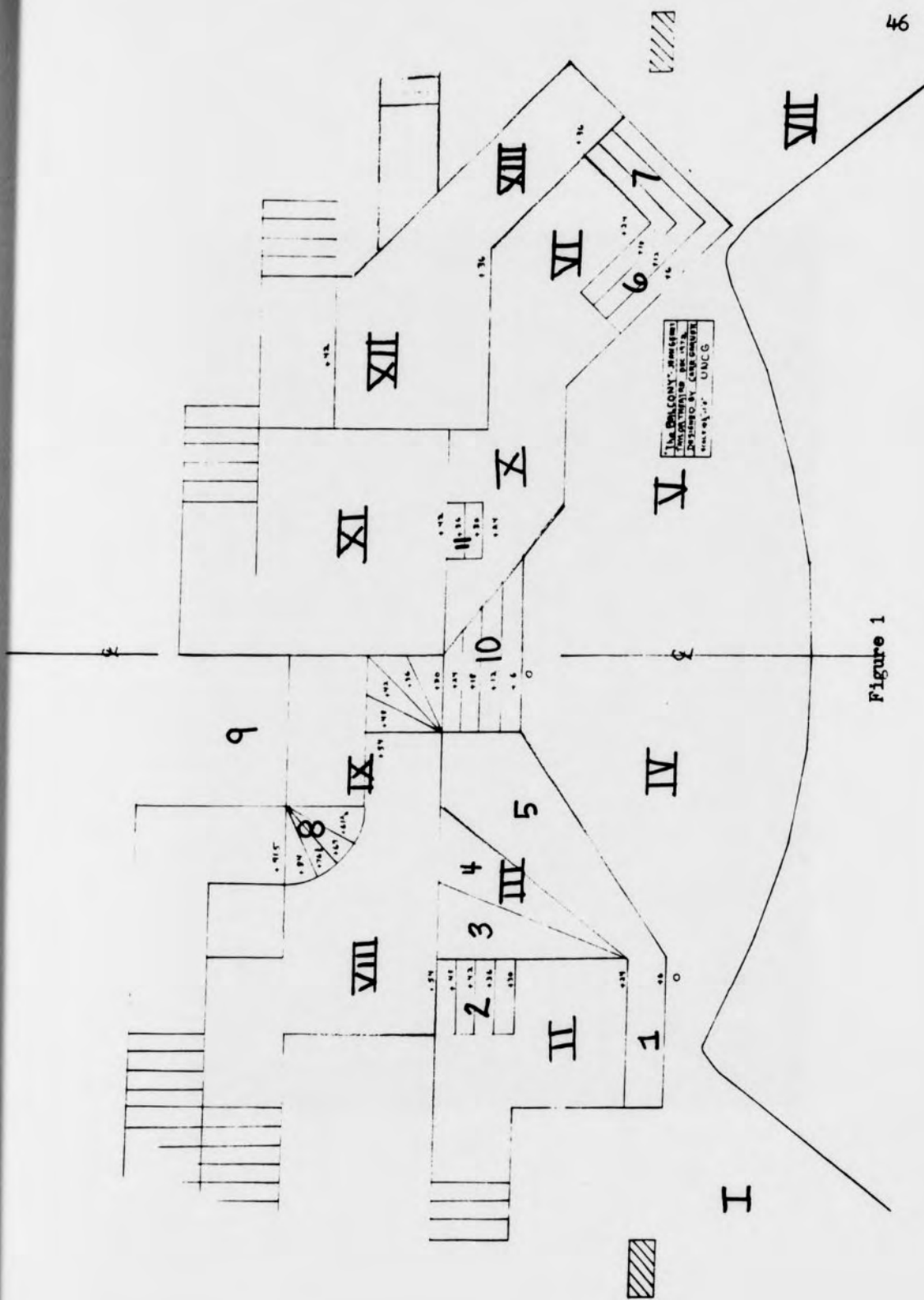
(AS THE HOUSE LIGHTS GO DOWN, THE "KYRIE" OF THE "MASS FOR THE BALCONY" BEGINS. FIGURE 1.) THE LIGHTS FADE UP IN AREA IX DURING THE FOLLOWING SPEECH TO REVEAL WHAT SEEMS TO BE A SACRISTY; THE ILLUSION OF AN ALTAR, PLATFORM 9, AND AN AUSTERE CROSS HANGING OVER PLATFORM 9 FROM WHICH THE LIGHT SEEMS TO POUR. IN FRONT OF THE CROSS AND ALTAR, FULL BACK, IS THE BISHOP IN MITRE AND GILDED CAPE WITH PADDED SHOULDERS. HE APPEARS LARGER THAN LIFE IN COTHURNI. RIGHT CENTER OF THE BISHOP, IN FRONT OF STEP UNIT 8, IS THE WOMAN PENITENT, CLOTHED IN A BLUE DRAPE, LEANING ON HER KNEES WITH UPSTAGE LEFT ARM OUTSTRETCHED TOWARD THE BISHOP. FIGURE 2.) STANDING LEFT, BESIDE THE CHAIR PLACED RIGHT CENTER AREA VIII IS ANOTHER FIGURE, MADAME IRMA. SHE IS NOT QUITE VISIBLE, EXCEPT IN FORM REVEALING HER AS A WOMAN DRESSED IN RED. THE ENTIRE SCENE OCCURS IN AREAS VIII, IV, AND STEP UNIT 2 OF AREA II.)

THE BISHOP

(IN A LOW BUT FERVENT VOICE.) In truth, the mark of a prelate is not mildness or unction, but the most rigorous intelligence. Our heart is our undoing. We think we are master of our kindness; we are the slaves of a serene laxity. It is something quite other than intelligence that is involved. . . . (HE HESITATES.) It may be cruelty. And beyond that cruelty--and through it--a skilful, vigorous course towards Absence. Towards Death. (TURNING SLOWLY RIGHT TO FULL FRONT, RAISING MITRE ABOVE HIS HEAD AND SLOWLY CROSSING DOWN CENTER IX. WITH HIS CROSS, THE PENITENT TURNS HER OUTSTRETCHED ARM TOWARD HIM. THEY BOTH WEAR GROTESQUE MAKEUP.) God? (SMILING.) I can read your mind! (TO HIS MITRE, BEGINNING TO LOSE CONTROL IN HIS ECSTASY.) Mitre, bishop's bonnet, when my eyes close for the last time, it is you that I shall see behind my eyelids, you, my beautiful gilded hat . . . you, my handsome ornaments, copes, laces. . . .

IRMA

(HARSHLY.) An agreement's an agreement. When a deal's been made. . . . (THE "KYRIE" STOPS ABRUPTLY AS THE LIGHTS FADE UP QUICKLY IN AREAS VIII AND IX, REVEALING MADAME IRMA. THE PENITENT WOMAN RISES AND BEGINS TO ARRANGE HER DRAPE, REVEALING HER SCANTY CLOTHING UNDERNEATH, CROSSES DOWN RIGHT VIII AND SITS LOUNGING PROFILE FACING LEFT.)



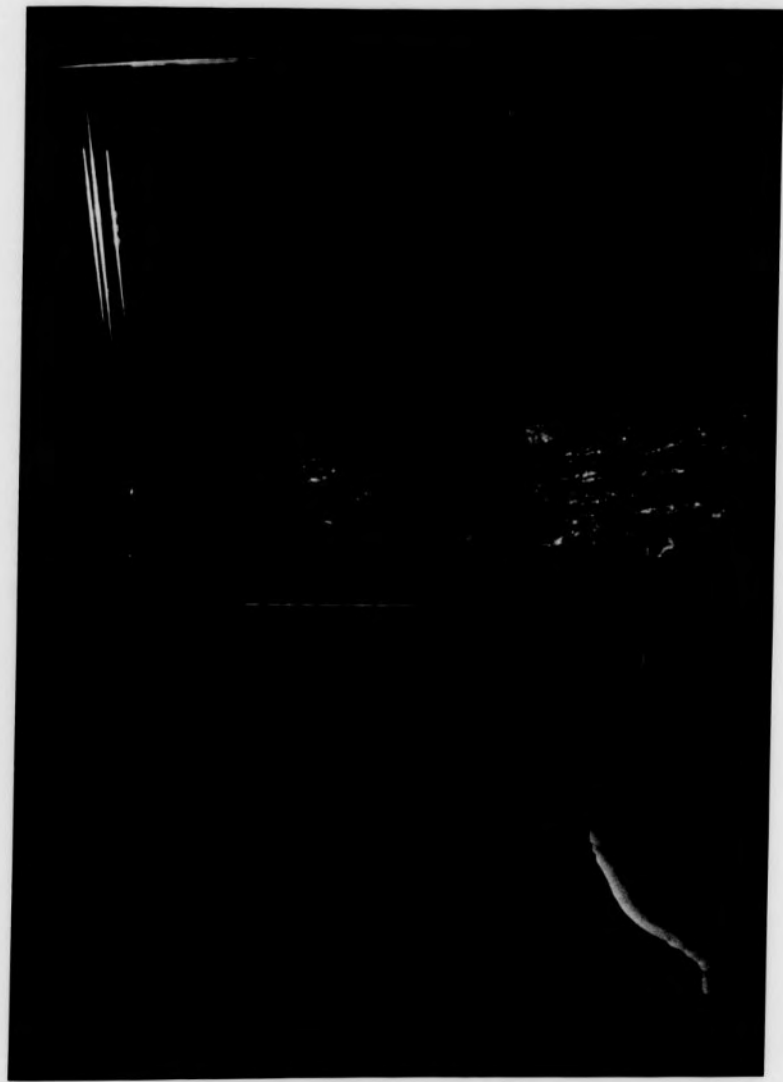


Figure 2

THE BISHOP

(IN TOTAL ECSTASY, NOT FALTERING.) And when the die is cast. . . .

IRMA

(ADAMANTLY.) No. Twenty. Twenty and no nonsense. Or I'll lose my temper. (COYLY AND RELAXING.) And that's not like me. . . . (SMILING.) Now, if you have any difficulties. . . .

THE BISHOP

(A PAUSE, HE SLOWLY LOWERS THE MITRE FROM ABOVE HIS HEAD, CROSSES DOWN CENTER VIII, TOSSES THE MITRE DOWN TO THE WOMAN.) Thank you.

IRMA

(COUNTERS, CROSSING ONE STEP DOWN LEFT CENTER VIII.) And don't break anything. We need that. (TO THE WOMAN.) Put it away. (THE WOMAN CROSSES UP LEFT VIII AND PLACES THE MITRE ON PLATFORM TOP OF STEP UNIT 8. THE BISHOP COUNTERS TO DOWN RIGHT VIII.)

THE BISHOP

(FACING OUT, AFTER A DEEP SIGH, PETULANTLY.) I've been told that this house is going to be besieged. The rebels have already crossed the river.

IRMA

. . . You can slip round behind the Archbishop's Palace. Then, down Fishmarket Street. . . . (SUDDENLY A SCREAM OF PAIN, UTTERED BY A WOMAN OFFSTAGE LEFT, CAUSING THE THREE TO TURN LEFT WITH SURPRISE. SPEAKS TO HERSELF, TURNING FRONT.) But I told them to be quiet. Good thing I remembered to cover the windows with padded curtains. (SUDDENLY AMIABLE, INSIDIOUS, TURNING IN TO THE BISHOP.) Well, and what was it this evening? A blessing? A prayer? A mass? A perpetual adoration?

THE BISHOP

(GRAVELY, RELAXING HIMSELF.) Let's not talk about that now. It's over. I'm concerned only about getting home. . . . (CROSSES UP CENTER TOWARD CHAIR TO SIT.)

THE WOMAN

(QUICKLY, SADISTICALLY, CROSSING DOWN CENTER VIII, LOUNGING LEFT OF THE BISHOP'S FEET.) There was a blessing, Madame. Then, my confession. . . .

IRMA

And after that?

THE BISHOP

That'll do!

THE WOMAN

That was all. At the end, my absolution.

IRMA

(CROSSING DOWN A STEP TO LEFT OF THE BISHOP.) Won't anyone be able to witness it? Just once?

THE BISHOP

(FRIGHTENED.) No, no. Those things must remain secret, and they shall. (SLOWLY SITTING.) It's indecent enough to talk about them while I'm to be undressed. (ADAMANTLY.) Nobody. And all the doors must be closed. Firmly closed, shut, buttoned, laced, hooked, sewn. . . .

IRMA

I merely asked. . . .

THE BISHOP

Sewn, shut, Madame.

IRMA

(A PAUSE, ANNOYED.) You'll allow me at least, won't you, to feel a little uneasy . . . professionally? I said twenty.

THE BISHOP

(HIS VOICE SUDDENLY GROWS CLEAR AND SHARP, AS IF HE WERE AWAKENING. HE DISPLAYS A LITTLE ANNOYANCE.) We didn't tire ourselves. Barely six sins, and far from my favourite ones.

THE WOMAN

(ROLLING OVER DOWN RIGHT TO LOUNGE ON STEP UNIT 2, AREA II, RIGHT OF THE BISHOP.) Six, but deadly ones! And it was quite a job finding those.

THE BISHOP

(UNEASILY.) What? You mean they were false?

THE WOMAN

They were real, all right! I mean it was a job committing them. If only you realized what it takes, what a person has to go through, in order to reach the point of disobedience.

THE BISHOP

(RAISING HIS RIGHT HAND OVER HER HEAD, SPEAKING IN A REVERENT TONE.) I can imagine, my child. The order of the world is so lax that you can do as you please there--or almost. But if your sins were false, you may say so now.

IRMA

Oh no! I can hear you complaining already the next time you come. No. They were real. (TO THE WOMAN, CROSSING DOWN CENTER.) Untie his laces. Take off his shoes. And when you dress him, be careful he doesn't catch cold. (TURNS UP CROSSING UP RIGHT VIII TO EXIT, CATCHES HERSELF UP CENTER AND TURNS TO THE BISHOP.) Would you like a toddy, a hot drink?

THE BISHOP

(AS THE WOMAN STARTS UNTYING HIS SHOES.) Thank you. I haven't time. I must be going. (IRMA NODS AND BEGINS TO EXIT UP RIGHT. SHE IS CAUGHT UP CENTER BY THE BISHOP AS HE SPEAKS DREAMILY.) Yes, six, but deadly ones!

IRMA

(CROSSING LEFT CENTER TO THE LEFT OF THE CHAIR TO VERBALLY RAISE HIM. THE WOMAN RISES.) Get up, we'll undress you!

THE BISHOP

(PLEADING.) No, no, not yet.

IRMA

It's time. Come on! Quick! Make it snappy! (WHILE THEY TALK, THE WOMAN UNDRESS HIM. OR RATHER THEY MERELY REMOVE PINS AND UNTIE CORDS THAT SEEM TO SECURE THE COPE, STOLE AND SURPLICE.)

THE BISHOP

(RISES, CROSSES TWO STEPS LEFT TO DOWN LEFT CENTER VIII AND TURNS TO THE WOMAN WHO IS NOW STANDING ON HIS RIGHT. IRMA HAS COUNTERED TO HIS LEFT. SPEAKS TO THE WOMAN.) The sins, you really did commit them?

THE WOMAN

(DISINTERESTED, ANSWERING AS IF IT WERE A CHORE.) I did.

THE BISHOP

(BEING PULLED BY THE WOMAN A STEP RIGHT.) When you moved towards me with your face forward, was it really aglow with the light of the flames?

THE WOMAN

It was.

THE BISHOP

And when my ringed hand came down on your forehead, forgiving it. . . .

THE WOMAN

It was.

THE BISHOP

And when my gaze pierced your lovely eyes?

THE WOMAN

It was.

IRMA

(TO PUSH HIM ON TO REACHING HIS ECSTASY.) Was there at least a glimmer of repentance in her lovely eyes, my Lord?

THE BISHOP

(THE MAMMOTH SHOULDERS CONSTITUTING THE OUTER GARMENT OF HIS BISHOP'S ROBES FALL OFF. HE SPEAKS PENSIVELY, STEPPING OUT OF HIS ROBES, CROSSING LEFT TO DOWN CENTER IX.) A fleeting glimmer. But was I seeking repentance in them? I saw there the greedy longing for transgression. In flooding it, evil all at once baptized it. Her big eyes opened on the abyss . . . a deathly pallor lit up--yes, Madame--lit up her face. (HE PAUSES AND COMES OUT OF HIS TRANCE, BACK TO REALITY.) But our holiness lies only in our being able to forgive you your sins. Even if they're only make-believe.

THE WOMAN

(HAVING LAID HIS ROBES ON THE CHAIR, CROSSING LEFT TO THE BISHOP. IRMA COUNTERS RIGHT. SUDDENLY COY.) And what if my sins were real?

THE BISHOP

(IN FEAR, TURNING RIGHT TO THE WOMAN.) You're mad! I hope you really didn't do all that!

IRMA

(TO THE BISHOP.) Don't listen to her. As for her sins, don't worry. Here there's no. . . .

THE BISHOP

(INTERRUPTING, SPEAKING SELF-ASSUREDLY.) I'm quite aware of that. Here there's no possibility of doing evil. You live in evil. (FACING OUT.) In the absence of remorse. How could you do evil? The Devil makes believe. That's how one recognizes him. He's the great Actor. And that's why the Church has anathematized actors.

THE WOMAN

(COY, CROSSING ONE STEP LEFT TO BISHOP.) Reality frightens you, doesn't it?

THE BISHOP

(TURNING RIGHT TO HER, IN FEAR.) If your sins were real, they would be crimes, and I'd be in a fine mess. (THE SAME TERRIBLE SCREAM IS HEARD AGAIN, ALL TURN LEFT AND FREEZE.)

IRMA

They're at it again! (STARTING TO EXIT UP RIGHT AS THE WOMAN CROSSES TO LEFT OF THE CHAIR.) I'll go and shut them up.

THE BISHOP

(REPRIMANDING IRMA, BUT WITH FEAR.) That wasn't a make-believe scream.

IRMA

(TURNING FRONT, OVER HER LEFT SHOULDER, WITH DISGUST OF THE BISHOP.) Who knows and what does it matter? (TURNS TO EXIT UP RIGHT, BUT IS CAUGHT BY THE BISHOP SPEAKING.)

THE BISHOP

(CROSSING LEFT TO IMAGINARY MIRROR PERPENDICULAR TO THE AUDIENCE, EXTREME UP LEFT AREA IX.) Now answer, mirror, answer me. Do I come here to discover evil and innocence? (OVER RIGHT SHOULDER, TO IRMA, VERY GENTLY.) Leave the room! I want to be by myself.

IRMA

It's late. And the later it gets, the more dangerous it'll be . . .

THE BISHOP

(PLEADING, TURNING RIGHT, HANDS CLASPED IN FRONT.) Just one more minute.

IRMA

(CROSSING DOWN TWO STEPS TO CENTER AREA VIII.) You've been here two hours and twenty minutes. In other words, twenty minutes too long. . . .

THE BISHOP

(SUDDENLY INCENSED, TURNING FULL FRONT, AWAY FROM IRMA.) I want to be by myself. Eavesdrop, if you want to--I know you do, anyway--and don't come back till I've finished. (THE WOMEN EXIT UP LEFT, LOOKING AS IF THEY WERE OUT OF PATIENCE. THE BISHOP REMAINS ALONE. AFTER MAKING A VISIBLE EFFORT TO CALM HIMSELF, CROSSES UP LEFT AREA IX, FACES THE "MIRROR," BEING PROFILE TO THE AUDIENCE, HOLDING HIS SURPLICE.) Now answer, mirror, answer me. Do I come here to discover evil and innocence? And in your gilt-edged glass, what was I? (TURNING RIGHT TO FULL FRONT, CROSSING RIGHT TWO STEPS.) Never--I affirm it before God Who sees me--I never desired the episcopal throne. To become bishop, (CROSSING CENTER, WALKING UP STEP UNIT 8.) mount step by step--by means of virtues or vices--would have been to turn away from the ultimate dignity of bishop. I shall explain: (SITS ON THIRD STEP, FACING OUT. SPEAKS IN A TONE OF GREAT PRECISION, AS IF PURSUING A LINE OF LOGICAL REASONING.) in order to become a bishop, I should have had to make a zealous effort not to be one. Having become a bishop, I should have had--in order to be one for myself, of course!--I should have had to be constantly aware of being one so as to perform my function. (RISES, TURNS TOWARDS THE CROSS.) Let us continue. But--there's the crux! (HE LAUGHS AS HE SPIES THE CROSS. CROSSES UP STEPS TO TOP OF STEP UNIT 8, UP RIGHT CENTER IX, TURNS FULL FRONT.) Yes I speak Latin!--a function is a function. It's not a mode of being. But a bishop--that's a mode of being. It's a trust. A burden. Mitres, lace, gold-cloth and glass trinkets, genuflexions. . . . To hell with the function!

IRMA

(HE TURNS LEFT, IRMA ENTERS UP RIGHT VIII CROSSING CENTER.) Have you finished?

THE BISHOP

(TURNING RIGHT.) For Christ's sake, leave me alone. Get the hell out! I'm probing myself. (IRMA PAUSES ONE BEAT, EXITS UP RIGHT. CONTROLLING HIMSELF, TURNS CENTER, FULL FRONT TO IMAGINARY MIRROR.) The majesty, the dignity, that light up my person, do not emanate from the attributions of my function.--But from a more mysterious brilliance, from the fact that the bishop precedes me. Do I make myself clear, mirror, gilded image, ornate as a box of Mexican cigars? (CROSSING DOWN STEPS.) And I wish to be bishop in solitude, for appearance alone. . . . (SQUATTING ON THE BOTTOM STEP, BEATING ON THE STEPS.) And in order to destroy all function, I want to cause a scandal and feel you up, you slut, you bitch, you trollop, you tramp. . . .

IRMA

(ENTERING UP RIGHT, CROSSING TO CENTER; THE WOMAN ENTERS UP RIGHT, CROSSES DOWN RIGHT CENTER, RIGHT OF THE CHAIR.) That'll do now. You've got to leave.

THE BISHOP

(OVER HIS RIGHT SHOULDER.) I haven't finished.

IRMA

I'm not trying to pick an argument, and you know it, but you've no time to waste. . . .

THE BISHOP

(IRONICALLY.) What you mean is that you need the room for someone else.

IRMA

(VERY IRRITATED.) That's no business of yours. I've given you every attention while you've been here. And I repeat that it's dangerous for anyone to loiter in the streets. (SOUND OF GUN-FIRE IN THE DISTANCE.)

THE BISHOP

(RISING, BITTERLY.) That's not true. You don't give a damn about my safety. When the job's finished, you don't give a damn about anyone!

IRMA

(TO THE GIRL.) Stop listening to him and undress him. (THE WOMAN CROSSES LEFT, GRABS THE BISHOP, PULLS HIM RIGHT TO DOWN LEFT CENTER VIII; SHE IS RIGHT OF HIM. IRMA CROSSES DOWN TO THE BISHOP'S LEFT.) Lend a hand. You're stiff.

THE BISHOP

(WITH A FOOLISH LOOK AS THE WOMEN PULL CORDS, CAUSING THE REMAINING GARMENTS TO FALL TO THE FLOOR. HE STANDS IN T-SHIRT, SHORTS, SOCKS, AND GARTERS.) Stiff? I'm stiff? A solemn stiffness! Final immobility. . . . (IRMA CROSSES BEHIND THE BISHOP TO THE LEFT OF CHAIR WITH A GESTURE OF RESIGNATION TO THE WOMAN WHO CROSSES TO RIGHT OF CHAIR. THE BISHOP, PICKING UP HIS CLOTHES, WHICH ARE HEAPED ON THE FLOOR, GOING INTO ECSTASY.) Ornaments, laces, through you I re-enter myself. I reconquer a domain. I beleaguer a very ancient place from which I was driven. I install myself in a clearing where suicide has at last become possible. The judgment depends on me, and here I stand, face to face with my death.

IRMA

That's all very fine, but you've got to go.

THE BISHOP

Bishop! Face to face with my death. . . . (BREAKING HIS TRANCE, TURNING QUICKLY RIGHT TO SNAP AT IRMA.) Because our Chief of Police, that wretched

incompetent, is letting us be slaughtered by the rabble! (RETURNING TO BUILD INTO ECSTASY, CROSSING LEFT TO DOWN CENTER IX, FACING FRONT, CLUTCHING HIS BISHOP'S ROBES IN FRONT OF HIM.) Ornaments! Mitres! Laces! You, above all, oh gilded cope, you protect me from the world. --rigid cope, you make it possible for the most tender and luminous sweetness to ripen in warmth and darkness. My charity, a charity that will (TOSSING HIS ROBES UP AND CATCHING THEM. THE LIGHTS FADE TO ISOLATE THE BISHOP IN AMBER AND RED HUES; THE CROSS IS ILLUMINATED.) flood the world--it was under this carapace that I distilled it. . . . And my hand would emerge at times, knife-like, to bless? Or cut, mow down? Underneath, my hand would dream. . . . (CLUTCHING HIS ROBES TO HIS CHEST, GOING INTO THE EMPYREAN, THE LIGHTS SLOWLY FADE TO A BLACKOUT.) Ornaments, gilded copes. . . .

SCENE TWO

(SCENE TWO TAKES PLACE LEFT AREA IV, DOWNSTAGE AREA XII, AND AREAS VI, VII, X, AND XIII.)

THE THIEF

(IN TOTAL DARKNESS A HARSH FEMALE VOICE IS HEARD.) Not yet! Lick it! Lick it first. . . . (SHE LAUGHS VIOLENTLY. BLUE/WHITE LIGHTING FADES UP ON AREA X, REVEALING THE THIEF CENTER, POSED WITH HER ARMS UP, STANDING ON HER RIGHT LEG, HER LEFT LEG OUTSTRETCHED SO THE TIP OF HER BOOT IS COAXING THE JUDGE WHO IS ON HIS KNEES DOWN RIGHT AREA X FACING HER. HIS RIGHT ARM IS ATTEMPTING TO GRASP HER OUTSTRETCHED BOOT. THE THIEF IS DRAPED IN WHORISH GARB WITH A RAGGED SCRIM DRAPED FORMING A POUCH AT FRONT. SHE WEARS GARISH MAKEUP. THE JUDGE, ALSO IN GARISH MAKEUP, IS IN COTHURNI AND MOUNDS OF A BLACK AND BLUE DRAPED ROBE. IN DIM LIGHT IS VISIBLE A BLOCK INDICATIVE OF A BENCH PLACED UP LEFT CENTER AREA VI, FLUSH WITH AREA XIII. TO THE RIGHT OF THE BENCH IN DIM LIGHT IS ANOTHER FIGURE, THE EXECUTIONER. HE IS IN GARISH MAKEUP, A COSTUME SIMILAR TO MADAME IRMA'S WHORES, THOUGH HIS OPEN, SLEEVELESS BODICE REVEALS HIM AS A HUNK OF FLESH. IN HIS RIGHT HAND HE HOLDS AN ENORMOUS WHIP. HE IS OBVIOUSLY ENJOYING THE SCENE BEFORE HIM. THE THIEF CROSSES UP TO DOWN RIGHT AREA X, FACES FRONT.)

THE JUDGE

(RISING, THEN CROSSING LEFT TOWARD THE BENCH. SEVERELY.) For you're a thief! You were caught . . . your movements are hedged about by a strong and subtle network, my strong-arm cops? They're watchful, swivel-eyed insects that lie in wait for you. All of you! And they bring you captive, (SITTING ON BENCH.) to the Bench. . . . What have you to say for yourself? You were caught. . . . (TO THE EXECUTIONER.) Put your hand into her skirt. (THE EXECUTIONER CROSSES RIGHT TO THE THIEF. FACING FRONT, HE DIGS HIS HAND INTO THE THIEF'S POUCH, SEARCHING WITH PLEASURE. SHE IS OBVIOUSLY BECOMING ANNOYED WITH THE EXECUTIONER'S PLEASURE.) You'll find the pocket, the notorious Kangaroo Pocket. . . . (TO THE THIEF.)

that you fill with any old junk you pick up. Because you're an idiot to boot. . . . (TO THE EXECUTIONER.) What was there in that notorious Kangaroo Pocket? In that enormous paunch?

THE EXECUTIONER

(PULLING HIS HAND FROM THE POUCH, LEANING TOWARD THE JUDGE. IN THE MEAN-TIME, THE THIEF SLOWLY CREEPS DOWN TO UP RIGHT AREA IV.) Bottles of scent, my Lord, a flashlight, a bottle of Fly-tox, some oranges, several pairs of socks, bearskins, a Turkish towel, a scarf. (TO THE JUDGE.) Do you hear me? I said: a scarf.

THE JUDGE

(WITH A START.) A scarf? Ah ha, so that's it? (FINDING HER WITH HIS OUTSTRETCHED RIGHT ARM AND POINTED FINGER, HE MAKES THE THIEF FREEZE UP RIGHT AREA V, FACING RIGHT PROFILE, THEN WITH RESIGNATION SHE TURNS TOWARD HIM.) Why the scarf? Eh? What were you going to do with it? Whom were you planning to strangle? Answer. Who? . . . Are you a thief or a strangler? (VERY GENTLY, IMPLORINGLY, HIS ARMS OUTSTRETCHED, CLAPSED, BEGGING.) Tell me, my child, I beg of you, tell me you're a thief.

THE THIEF

(SITTING FIRMLY ON DOWN RIGHT CENTER AREA X PLATFORM.) Yes, my Lord.

THE EXECUTIONER

No!

THE THIEF

(LOOKING AT HIM IN SURPRISE.) No?

THE EXECUTIONER

(CROSSING RIGHT TWO STEPS TOWARD HER.) That's for later.

THE THIEF

Eh?

THE EXECUTIONER

Confess when you're supposed to. Plead not guilty. Deny it.

THE THIEF

(TO THE EXECUTIONER.) What, and get beaten again?

THE JUDGE

(RISING, STATING FIRMLY.) Exactly, my child: and get beaten. You must first deny, then admit and repent. I want to see hot tears gush from your lovely eyes. Oh! I want you to be drenched in them. The power of tears! . . . (LOOKING AROUND HIMSELF, SITS.) Where's my statute-book? (SPIES HIS BOOK RIGHT OF THE BENCH AND PICKS IT UP.)

THE THIEF

I've already cried. . . .

THE JUDGE

(HE SEEMS TO BE READING.) Under the blows. I want tears of repentance. When I see you wet as a meadow I'll be utterly satisfied!

THE THIEF

(RUNNING LEFT, PLEADING WITH HIM, HER BODY SPRAWLED ON STEP UNIT 6 OF AREA VI.) It's not easy. I tried to cry before. . . .

THE JUDGE

(NO LONGER READING. IN A HALF-THEATRICAL ALMOST FAMILIAR TONE. PUTS BOOK DOWN.) You're quite young. Are you new here? (ANXIOUSLY.) At least you're not a minor?

THE THIEF

(SITTING UP.) Oh no, sir.

THE JUDGE

Call me my Lord. How long have you been here?

THE EXECUTIONER

(CROSSING LEFT TO RIGHT CENTER AREA VI.) Since the day before yesterday, my Lord.

THE JUDGE

(RESUMING THE THEATRICAL TONE AND RESUMING THE READING.) Let her speak. I like that puling voice of hers, that voice without resonance. . . . Look here: you've got to be a model thief if I'm to be a model judge. If you're a fake thief, I become a fake judge. Is that clear?

THE THIEF

Oh yes, my Lord.

THE JUDGE

(HE CONTINUES READING.) Good. (RISING, HE PROCEEDS TO ACT OUT THE FOLLOWING SPEECH WITH ARM GESTURES.) Thus far everything has gone off well. My executioner has hit hard . . . for he too has his function. We are bound together, you, he and I. For example, if he didn't hit, how could I stop him from hitting? Therefore, he must strike so that I can intervene and demonstrate my authority. And you must deny your guilt so he can beat you. (A NOISE IS HEARD, AS OF SOMETHING HAVING FALLEN IN THE NEXT ROOM. ALL LOOK RIGHT TO OFFSTAGE. IN A NATURAL TONE.) What's that? Are all the doors firmly shut? Can anyone see us, or hear us? (HE ANXIOUSLY CROSSES TWO STEPS RIGHT.)

THE EXECUTIONER

No, no, you needn't worry. I bolted the door.

THE JUDGE

(IN A NATURAL TONE.) Are you sure?

THE EXECUTIONER

You can take my word for it. (HE PUTS HIS HAND INTO HIS POCKET, CROSSES TO UP LEFT AREA X AS THE JUDGE CROSSES BACK TO BENCH AND SITS. TURNING TO THE JUDGE.) Can I have a smoke?

THE JUDGE

(IN A NATURAL TONE.) The smell of tobacco inspires me. Smoke away. (SAME NOISE AS BEFORE. ALL LOOK RIGHT.) What is that? What is it? Can't they leave me in peace? (HE GETS UP, CROSSES RIGHT TWO STEPS TO RIGHT CENTER AREA VI.) What's going on?

THE EXECUTIONER

(CURTLY.) Nothing at all. Someone must have dropped something. You're getting nervous.

THE JUDGE

(IN A NATURAL TONE.) That may be, but my nervousness makes me aware. It keeps me on the alert. (IN AN EVEN MORE FAMILIAR TONE.) You seem anxious. Has anything new happened?

THE EXECUTIONER

(PAUSES, CROSSES DOWN TO RIGHT OF THE JUDGE.) This afternoon, just before you arrived, the rebels took three key-positions. They set fire to several places. Not a single fireman came out. Everything went up in flames. The Palace . . .

THE JUDGE

And the Chief of Police? Twiddling his thumbs as usual?

THE THIEF

(RISES, CROSSING UP STEPS, CROSSING TO RIGHT OF THE EXECUTIONER.) There's been no news of him for four hours. If he can get away, he's sure to come here. He's expected at any moment.

THE JUDGE

(TO THE THIEF.) In any case, he'd better not plan to come by way of Queens Bridge. It was blown up last night.

THE THIEF

We know that. We heard the explosion from here.

THE JUDGE

(RESUMING HIS THEATRICAL TONE. HE READS THE STATUTE-BOOK.) All right. Let's get on with it. (THE JUDGE CROSSES LEFT TO HIS BENCH AND SITS. THE EXECUTIONER KIDS THE THIEF'S BEHIND WITH HIS RIGHT LEG, MAKING HER JUMP DOWN TO UP RIGHT AREA IV.) Thus, taking advantage of the sleep of the just, taking advantage of a moment's inattention, you rob them, you ransack, you pilfer and purloin. . . .

THE THIEF

No, my Lord, never. . . .

THE EXECUTIONER

(WITH WHIP OUTSTRETCHED IN RIGHT ARM, TURNED TO HER READY TO STRIKE.) A few stripes on her back?

THE THIEF

(CRYING OUT.) Arthur!

THE EXECUTIONER

Don't address me. Answer his Lordship. And call me Mr. Executioner.

THE THIEF

Yes, Mr. Executioner. (THE EXECUTIONER RELAXES, THE THIEF CROSSES LEFT, SITS ON STEP UNIT 6 FACING THE JUDGE.)

THE JUDGE

I continue: did you steal?

THE THIEF

I did, I did, my Lord.

THE JUDGE

Good. Now answer quickly, and to the point: what else did you steal?

THE THIEF

(LEANING IMPLORINGLY ON THE STEPS.) Bread, because I was hungry.

THE JUDGE

(RISING, HIS BODY IN ECSTASY.) Sublime! Sublime function! I'll have all that to judge. Oh, child, you reconcile me with the world. A judge! I'm going to be judge of your acts! On me depends the weighing, the balance. The world is an apple. I cut it in two: the good, the bad. And you agree, thank you, you agree to be the bad! (FACING THE AUDIENCE AND PANTOMIMING THE FOLLOWING.) Right before your eyes: nothing in my hands, nothing up my sleeve, remove the rot and cast it off. But it's a painful occupation. If every judgment were delivered seriously, each one would cost me my life. That's why I'm dead. I inhabit that region of exact freedom. I, King of Hell, weigh those who are dead, like myself.

THE THIEF

(CRAWLING UP THE STEPS, CROUCHING BEFORE HIM.) Sir!

THE JUDGE

(VERY BOMBASTICALLY.) Be still. In the depths of Hell I sort out the humans who venture there. Some to the flames, the others to the boredom of the fields of asphodel. You, thief, spy, she-dog, Minos is speaking to you, Minos judges you. (TO THE EXECUTIONER.) Cerberus?

THE EXECUTIONER

(JUMPING DOWN ON ALL FOURS, GROWLING VICIOUSLY, IMITATING THE DOG.) Bow-wow, bow-wow!

THE JUDGE

(CROSSING RIGHT TWO STEPS TO THE EXECUTIONER.) You're handsome! And the sight of a fresh victim makes you even handsomer. (HE CURLS UP THE EXECUTIONER'S LIPS.) Show your fangs. Dreadful. White. (SUDDENLY HE SEEMS ANXIOUS. TO THE THIEF.) But at least you're not lying about those thefts --you did commit them, didn't you?

THE EXECUTIONER

(RISING.) Don't worry. She committed them, all right. She wouldn't have dared not to. I'd have made her.

THE JUDGE

I'm almost happy. Continue. (CROSSES BACK TO THE BENCH AND SITS.) What did you steal? (SUDDENLY, MACHINE GUN-FIRE. THEY FREEZE.) There's simply no end to it. Not a moment's rest.

THE THIEF

I told you: the rebellion has spread all over the north of the city. . . .

THE EXECUTIONER

Shut up!

THE JUDGE

(IRRITATED.) Are you going to answer, yes or no? What else have you stolen? Where? When? How? How much? Why? For whom?

THE THIEF

(CROSSING RIGHT, ACTING OUT HER STORY UP RIGHT AREA V.) I very often entered houses when the maids were off. I used the tradesmen's entrance. . . . I stole from drawers, I broke into children's piggy-banks. (SHE IS VISIBLY TRYING TO FIND WORDS.) Once I dressed up as a lady. I put on a dark brown suit, a black straw hat with cherries, a veil and a pair of black shoes--with (STOMPING TWICE AS IN A FLAMENCO DANCE.) Cuban heels--then I went in. . . .

THE JUDGE

(IN A RUSH.) Where? Where? Where? Where--where--where? (RISING, PLEADING.) Where did you go in?

THE THIEF

(TURNING FRONT, AWAY FROM THE JUDGE, TEASINGLY.) I can't remember. Forgive me.

THE EXECUTIONER

(LEANING FORWARD EXCITEDLY, CROSSING DOWN A STEP TO DOWN RIGHT CENTER AREA VI, WHIP OUTSTRETCHED IN RIGHT ARM READY TO STRIKE.) Shall I let her have it?

THE JUDGE

Not yet. (TO THE GIRL.) Where did you go in? Tell me where?

THE THIEF

(COWERING, LEANING BACK AGAINST PLATFORM X, UP CENTER OF AREA V, FACING RIGHT, IN A PANIC.) But I swear to you, I don't remember.

THE EXECUTIONER

(MORE AND MORE EXCITED, HIS BODY GROWING TENSE, ARM AND WHIP STILL RAISED.) Shall I let her have it? Shall I, my Lord?

THE JUDGE

(NOW REACHING ECSTASY, CROSSING RIGHT BEHIND THE EXECUTIONER.) Ah! ah! Your pleasure depends on me. You like to thrash, eh? I'm pleased with you, Executioner! Masterly mountain of meat, hunk of beef that's set in motion at a word from me! (HE PRETENDS TO LOOK AT HIMSELF IN THE EXECUTIONER, ADORINGLY CARESSING HIS SHOULDERS AND ARMS. THE EXECUTIONER'S RIGHT ARM, OUTSTRETCHED IN A SYMBOL OF STRENGTH, STILL HOLDING THE WHIP. THE THIEF SLIPS OVER LEFT TO RIGHT AREA VI, SPRAWLING LENGTHWISE ON THE UPSTAGE PORTION OF STEP UNIT 6, ON HER BACK, ENJOYING AND OBSERVING THE JUDGE.) FIGURE 3. Mirror that glorifies me! Image that I can touch, I love you. Never would I have the strength or skill to leave streaks of fire on her back. You're all there, my huge arm, too heavy for me, too big, too fat for my shoulder, walking at my side all by itself! Arm, hundredweight of meat, without you I'd be nothing. (RAISING THE EXECUTIONER'S ARM AND CROUCHING TO SPEAK UNDER IT TO THE THIEF.) And without you too, my child. . . . (CROSSING LEFT BEHIND THE EXECUTIONER TO THE THIEF. THE JUDGE IS CENTER AREA VI, THE EXECUTIONER ON HIS RIGHT, THE THIEF ON HIS LEFT, LEFT CENTER OF STEP UNIT 6.) Ah, what a fine trio we make! (TO THE THIEF.) But you, you have a privilege that he hasn't, nor I either, that of priority. My being a judge is an emanation of your being a thief. You need only refuse--but you'd better not!--need only to refuse to be--what you are, therefore, who you are--for me to cease to be. . . . But you won't refuse, will you? You won't refuse to be a thief? That would be wicked. It would be criminal. You'd deprive me of being! (IMPLORINGLY.) Say it my child, my love, you won't refuse?

THE THIEF

(COYLY, RISING, NOW UP LEFT AREA V, IN FRONT OF STEP UNIT 6.) Oh, I don't know.

THE JUDGE

What's that? What's that you say? You'd refuse? Tell me where. And tell me again what you've stolen.

THE THIEF

(CROSSING RIGHT TO CENTER AREA V.) No!

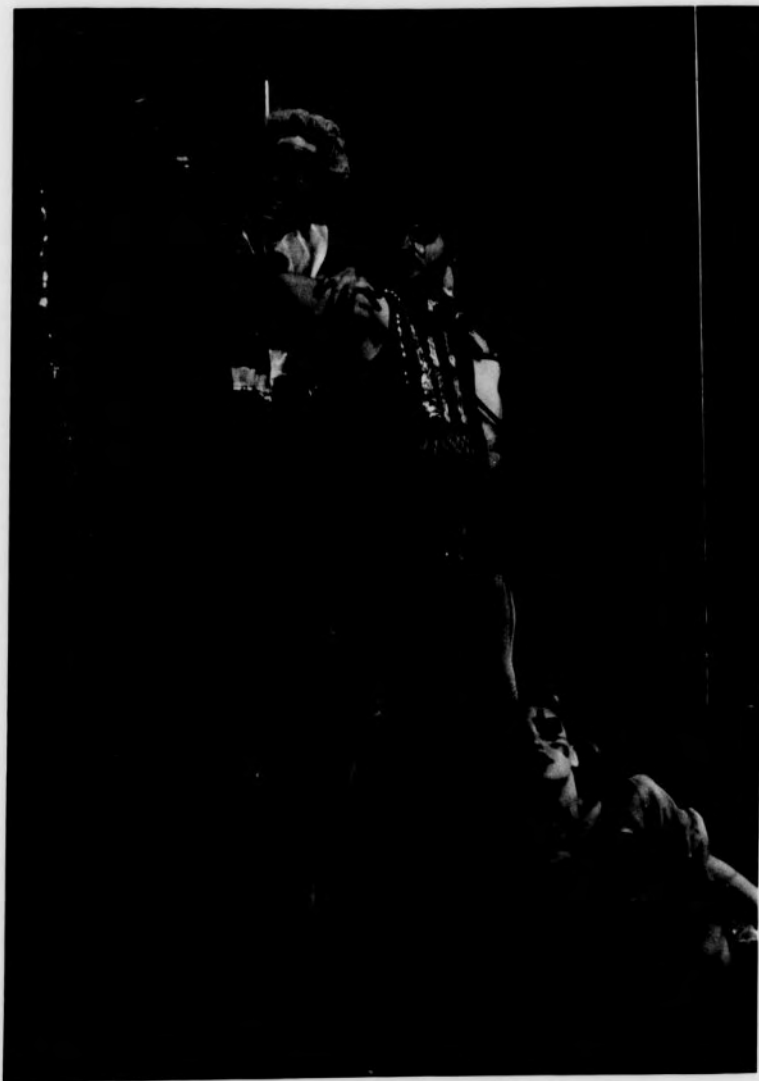


Figure 3

THE JUDGE

Tell me where. Don't be cruel. . . .

THE THIEF

You're becoming too familiar. Really!

THE JUDGE

Miss. . . . Madame. I beg of you. (HE FALLS TO HIS KNEES AND BEGINS CRAWLING DOWN RIGHT TOWARDS HER, DOWN CENTER OF STEP UNIT 6.) I beseech you. Don't leave me in this position, waiting to be a judge. If there were no judge, what would become of me, but what if there were no thieves?

THE THIEF

(IRONICALLY.) And what if there weren't?

THE JUDGE

(RISING ON HIS KNEES, CENTER AREA V.) It would be awful. (DOWN ON ALL FOURS, RESUMING CRAWLING, GETTING CAUGHT IN HIS GARMENTS DURING THE WHOLE ORDEAL.) But you won't, can't let you. Please understand me: hide, as long as you can, as long as my nerves can bear it, behind the refusal to confess--be spiteful, make me yearn, even prance, make me dance, drool, sweat, whinny with impatience, crawl . . . do you want me to crawl?

THE EXECUTIONER

(TO THE JUDGE.) Crawl. (THE THIEF CROSSES LEFT IN FRONT OF THE JUDGE, CROSSES OVER STEP UNITS 6 AND 7 INTO UP CENTER AREA VII.)

THE JUDGE

(PIVOTS LEFT, RAISES UP ON HIS KNEES.) I'm proud.

THE EXECUTIONER

(THREATENINGLY, WHIP OUTSTRETCHED.) Crawl! (THE JUDGE, WHO WAS ON HIS KNEES, LIES FLAT ON HIS STOMACH AND CRAWLS LEFT SLOWLY TOWARDS THE THIEF, CROSSING LEFT, UP TO CENTER OF STEP UNIT 6.) Good. Continue.

THE JUDGE

(TO THE THIEF.) You're quite right, you rascal, to make me crawl after my judgeship, but if you were to refuse for good, you hussy, it would be criminal. . . .

THE THIEF

(CROSSING RIGHT, IN FRONT OF THE CORNER JOINING AT STEP UNITS 6 AND 7 TO CENTER AREA V.) Call me Madame, and ask politely.

THE JUDGE

Will I get what I want?

THE THIEF

(COYLY.) It costs a lot--stealing does.

THE JUDGE

(TURNING RIGHT, CROSSING DOWN OFF STEP UNIT.) I'll pay! I'll pay whatever I have to, Madame. But if I no longer had to divide the Good from the Evil, of what use would I be? I ask you?

THE THIEF

I ask myself.

THE JUDGE

(IS INFINITELY SAD.) A while ago I was going to be Minos. My Cerberus was barking. (TO THE EXECUTIONER.) Do you remember? (THE EXECUTIONER INTERRUPTS THE JUDGE BY CRACKING HIS WHIP.) You were so cruel, so mean! So good! And me, I was pitiless. I was going to fill Hell with the souls of the damned, to fill prisons. Prisons! Prisons! Prisons, dungeons, blessed places where evil is impossible. One cannot commit evil in evil. What I desire above all is not to condemn, but to judge. . . . (HE TRIES TO GET UP.)

THE EXECUTIONER

Crawl! (THE JUDGE FALLS TO HIS STOMACH. THE EXECUTIONER THEN TURNS UP TO RIGHT CENTER AREA VI, WINDING UP THE WHIP.) And hurry up, I've got to go and get dressed.

THE JUDGE

(SLOWLY CRAWLING RIGHT TOWARDS THE THIEF; TO THE GIRL.) Madame! Madame, please, I beg of you. I'm willing to lick your shoes, but tell me you're a thief. . . .

THE THIEF

(IN A LOW HARSH CRY, RAISING UP HER LEFT FOOT.) Not yet! Lick! Lick! Lick first! (THE FIGURES APPEAR FROZEN ON THE ENDING LINE, THE THIEF LEFT AREA IV POSTED WITH ARMS OUTSTRETCHED UPWARD, LEFT FOOT TEMPTING THE JUDGE, RIGHT AREA V, ON HIS KNEES, WHOSE OUTSTRETCHED RIGHT HAND AND MOUTH REACH FOR THE THIEF'S BOOT. THE EXECUTIONER WATCHES, CHUCKLING, HANDS ON HIPS. THE LIGHTS FADE SLOWLY, ISOLATING THE FIGURES. IN THE DISTANCE, MACHINE GUN FIRE.)

SCENE THREE

(SCENE THREE IS STAGED IN AREAS I, II, III, AND IV. THERE IS A BROWN LEATHER CHAIR PLACED RIGHT CENTER AREA II, FACING DOWN CENTER OF AREA IV. THERE IS A BELL CORD HANGING DIRECTLY ABOVE UP CENTER STEP UNIT 3 OF AREA III. IN THE ROOM, LEFT OF THE CHAIR, AREA II, IS A TIMID-LOOKING GENTLEMAN, THE GENERAL. HE REMOVES HIS JACKET, PLACES IT ON THE CHAIR. IRMA IS STANDING LEFT OF THE CHAIR, CENTER AREA II.)

THE GENERAL

(HE POINTS TO THE HAT, JACKET AND GLOVES.) Have that cleared out.

IRMA

It'll be folded and wrapped.

THE GENERAL

Have it removed from sight.

IRMA

It'll be put away. Even burned.

THE GENERAL

(CROSSING LEFT TO IN FRONT OF THE CHAIR, DOWN CENTER.) Yes, yes, of course, I'd like it to burn! (GETTING EXCITED IN ANTICIPATION, RAISING HIS LEFT ARM AS IN A MILITARY POSE.) Like cities at twilight.

IRMA

(CROSSING LEFT TO CENTER STEP UNIT 4, AREA III, CUTTING OFF THE GENERAL'S EXCITEMENT.) Did you notice anything on the way?

THE GENERAL

(ATTEMPTING TO REGAIN COMPOSURE, HE PROCEEDS NERVOUSLY ASSUMING CONTROL.) I ran very serious risks. The populace has blown up dams. Whole areas are flooded. The arsenal in particular. So that all the powder supplies are wet. And the weapons rusty. I had to make some rather wide detours-- though I didn't trip over a single drowned body. Let's talk of something else. (REALIZING THE LUDICROUSNESS OF HIS PRECEDING STATEMENT, HE TURNS UP BEHIND THE CHAIR AND SHOWS HIS NERVOUS WEAKNESS, GRASPING ON TO THE BACK OF THE CHAIR.) The important thing is how I'm going to get out of this place. It'll be late by the time I leave. . . .

IRMA

(CROSSING UP TO DOWN LEFT STEP UNIT 3.) About it's being late. . . .

THE GENERAL

That does it. (HE REACHES INTO HIS POCKET, TAKES OUT SOME BANKNOTES, COUNTS THEM AND CROSSES LEFT TO GIVE SOME TO IRMA. SHE TURNS LEFT, AWAY FROM HIM AND PLACES THEM IN HER BRASSIERE.) I'm not keen about being shot down in the dark when I leave. There won't be anyone to escort me?

IRMA

(CROSSING TO CENTER STEP UNIT 5.) I'm afraid not. Unfortunately Arthur's not free. (A LONG PAUSE.)

THE GENERAL

(SUDDENLY IMPATIENT, CROSSING DOWN RIGHT TO DOWN RIGHT AREA II.) But . . . isn't she coming?

IRMA

I can't imagine what she's doing. I gave instructions that everything was to be ready by the time you arrived. (CROSSING UP RIGHT TO STEP UNIT 4 TO PULL BELL ROPE.) I'll ring.

THE GENERAL

Don't! (CROSSING UP LEFT AREA II, ON STEPS 2 AND 3 OF STEP UNIT 2.) I'll attend to that. I like to ring! (HE RINGS.) Ringing's authoritative. Ah, to ring out commands.

IRMA

In a little while, General. Oh, I'm so sorry, here am I giving you your rank. . . . In a little while you'll . . .

THE GENERAL

(CROSSING DOWN RIGHT QUICKLY BEHIND THE CHAIR AGAIN, TURNING AWAY, EMBARRASSED IN ANTICIPATION.) Sh! Don't say it.

IRMA

(CROSSING RIGHT TO LEFT OF CHAIR.) You have such force, such youth! such dash!

THE GENERAL

And spurs. Will I have spurs? I said they were to be fixed to my boots. Oxblood boots, right?

IRMA

Yes, General. And patent-leather.

THE GENERAL

(CROSSING TO DOWN RIGHT AREA II.) Oxblood. Patent-leather, very well, but with mud?

IRMA

With mud and perhaps a little blood. I've had the decorations prepared.

THE GENERAL

Authentic ones?

IRMA

Authentic ones. (SUDDENLY A WOMAN'S LONG SCREAM FROM OFF STAGE RIGHT.)

THE GENERAL

What's that? (CROSSING UP A STEP TO LOOK OFFSTAGE UP LEFT.)

IRMA

(CROSSING IN A STEP RIGHT.) Nothing. There's always some carelessness, on both sides.

THE GENERAL

(CROSSING DOWN RIGHT AREA II, ACTING OUT HIS WORDS.) But that cry? A woman's cry. A call for help perhaps? My heart skips a beat. . . . I spring forward. . . .

IRMA

(ICILY.) I want no trouble here. Calm down. For the time being, you're the decisive one.

THE GENERAL

That's right. (A WOMAN'S SCREAM AGAIN FROM OFFSTAGE RIGHT.) All the same, it's disturbing.

IRMA

What on earth can she be doing? (CROSSING UP LEFT TO THE BELL TO RING, BUT BEFORE SHE RINGS, THE PONY ENTERS FROM DOWN SIDE STAGE, AREA I. SHE CROSSES UP LEFT, CIRCLING UP RIGHT AREA IV, ACROSS CENTER AREA III, HEAD-ING TOWARDS THE CHAIR RIGHT CENTER AREA II. THE PONY GIRL WEARS THE STANDARD WHORE OUTFIT, BUT ADORNED WITH A BILLOWING NET TAIL. SHE CARRIES THE GENERAL'S UNIFORM, A GROTESQUE AND LARGE PANTS, JACKET, CAPE, CROP, HAT AND BOOTS.)

THE GENERAL

(SEVERELY, BUT HAPPY WITH EXCITEMENT.) So you finally got here? Half an hour late. That's more than needed to lose a battle.

IRMA

She'll redeem herself, General, I know her.

THE GENERAL

(THE PONY DRAPES THE UNIFORM ON STEP UNIT 2, AND PLACES THE BOOTS LEFT OF THE CHAIR. LOOKING AT THE BOOTS.) What about the blood? I don't see any blood.

IRMA

It dried. (CROSSING RIGHT TO LEFT OF CHAIR TO PONY'S RIGHT, PICKS UP THE GENERAL'S CIVILIAN CLOTHES AND DRAPING THEM OVER HER RIGHT ARM EXITS BEHIND THE CHAIR UP RIGHT AREA II, LOOKING BACK OVER HER LEFT SHOULDER AS SHE GOES.) Don't forget that it's the blood of your past battles. Well, then. I'll leave you. (THE PONY PREENS HERSELF.)

THE GENERAL

(IRRITATED.) I'll be left in peace, I hope. And you're late. Where the hell were you? Didn't they give you your feed-bag? You're smiling, are you? Smiling at your rider? (CROSSING TO HER, WITH HIS LEFT ARM OUTSTRETCHED. THEY ARE LEFT CENTER AREA II FACING OUT.) You recognize his hand, gentle but firm? (SHE SWISHES DOWN UNDER HIS ARM. HE STROKES HER.) My proud steed! My handsome mare, we've had many a spirited gallop together!

THE GIRL

And that's not all! I want to stride over the world (PRANCING LEFT, ACROSS AREA III TO DOWN CENTER AREA IV.) with my nervous legs and well-shod hooves. (RUNNING DIRECTLY RIGHT TO LEFT OF THE GENERAL, LEFT AREA II.) Take off your trousers and shoes so I can dress you.

THE GENERAL

(AS HE SITS DOWN ON THE CHAIR.) All right, but first, down on your knees! Come on, come on, bend your knees, bend them. . . . (THE GIRL REARS, UTTERS A WHINNY OF PLEASURE AND KNEELS LIKE A CIRCUS HORSE DOWN LEFT BEFORE THE GENERAL.) Bravo! Bravo, Dove! You haven't forgotten a thing. And now you're going to help me and answer my questions. It's fitting and proper for a nice filly to help her master unbutton himself and take off his gloves, and to be at his beck and call. (SHE BEGINS UNLACING HIS SHOES.) Ah, untying my laces. (DURING THE ENTIRE SCENE THAT FOLLOWS, THE GIRL HELPS THE GENERAL REMOVE HIS CLOTHES AND THEN DRESS UP AS A

GENERAL. WHEN HE IS COMPLETELY DRESSED, HE WILL BE SEEN TO HAVE TAKEN ON GIGANTIC PROPORTIONS, BY MEANS OF TRICK EFFECTS: INVISIBLE FOOT-GEAR, BROADENED SHOULDERS, EXCESSIVE MAKEUP.)

THE GIRL

(FONDLING HIS RIGHT FOOT.) Right foot still swollen?

THE GENERAL

Yes. It's my leading-foot. The one that prances. Like your hoof when you toss your head.

THE THIRL

(THROWING DOWN HIS FOOT, SHE CROSSES LEFT TO CENTER STEP 4 TURNED AWAY FROM HIM.) What am I doing?

THE GENERAL

Are you a horse or an illiterate? If you're a horse, you toss your head. (STRETCHES OUT HIS LEFT LEG, SHE CROSSES BACK, GETS ASTRIDE IT, THEY BOTH FACE DOWN LEFT.) Help me. Pull. Don't pull so hard. See here, you're not a plough-horse.

THE GIRL

I do what I have to do. (PULLS AND DROPS HIS LEGS.)

THE GENERAL

Are you rebelling? Already? Wait till I'm ready. When I put the bit into your mouth. . . .

THE GIRL

Oh no, not that. (SHE PULLS HIM UP AND BEGINS UNBUTTONING HIS SHIRT, PULLING IT OFF FROM BEHIND, CUDDLING ON HIS LEFT SIDE.)

THE GENERAL

A general reprimanded by his horse! You'll have the bit, the bridle, the harness, the saddlegirth, and I, in boots and helmet, will whip and plunge!

THE GIRL

The bit is awful. It makes the gums and the corners of the lips bleed. I'll drool blood. (SHE HAS UNZIPPED HIS PANTS, PULLED THEM DOWN AND HOLDS THEM ON THE FLOOR. SHE IS ON HIS LEFT, DOWN CENTER ON STEP UNIT 1.)

THE GENERAL

Foam pink and spit fire! But what a gallop! Along the rye-fields, through the alfalfa, over the meadows and dusty roads, over hill and dale, awake or asleep, (JERKING OUT LEFT LEG.) from dawn to twilight and from (JERKING OUT RIGHT LEG.) twilight. . . .

THE GIRL

(SHAKING OUT HIS TROUSERS, CROSSES UP BY THE LEFT OF THE GENERAL TO THE UNIFORM ON STEP UNIT 2.) It's quite a job dressing a victorious general who's to be buried. Do you want the sabre?

THE GENERAL

Let it lie, like Lafayette's. Conspicuously. (THE GIRL BUNDLES UP HIS CLOTHES AND HIDES THEM BEHIND THE ARMCHAIR.) The tunic? (SHE CROSSES LEFT TO THE TUNIC, HOLDS IT UP. SHE IS UP CENTER AREA II, HE DOWN LEFT AREA II.) Good. Got all the medals? Count 'em.

THE GIRL

(AFTER COUNTING THEM, VERY QUICKLY.) They're all here, sir.

THE GENERAL

What about the war? (CROSSING LEFT TO CENTER STEP 5, RIGHT ARM UP SHADING HIS EYES.) Where's the war?

THE GIRL

(VERY SOFTLY, CROSSING DOWN TO HIS RIGHT, HELPING HIM ON WITH HIS JACKET, THEN SLOWLY CROSSING DOWN TO DOWN RIGHT CENTER STEP 5.) It's approaching, sir. It's evening in an apple-orchard. The sky is calm and pink. The earth is bathed in a sudden peace--the moan of doves--the peace that precedes battles. The air is very still. (CROSSING DOWN CENTER AREA IV, PICKING UP AN IMAGINARY APPLE.) An apple has fallen to the grass. A yellow apple. (CROSSES UP RIGHT TO GET THE UNIFORM TROUSERS ON STEP UNIT 2.) Things are holding their breath. War is declared. The evening is very mild. . . .

THE GENERAL

But suddenly?

THE GIRL

(RUNNING DOWN AREA III BEHIND THE GENERAL TO DOWN CENTER AREA IV, PRESSING HIS PANTS OVER HER THIGHS.) FIGURE 4.7 We're at the edge of the meadow. I keep myself from flinging out, from whinnying. Your thighs are warm and you're pressing my flanks. Death. . . .



Figure 4

THE GENERAL

But suddenly?

THE GIRL

(RUNS UP RIGHT TO LEFT OF THE GENERAL, BEGINS TO HELP HIM PUT ON HIS PANTS, BUT SULKS ON HER KNEES BEFORE HIM AS HE STRUGGLES WITH THEM.) Death has pricked up her ears. She puts a finger to her lips, asking for silence. Things are lit up with an ultimate goodness. You yourself no longer heed my presence. . . .

THE GENERAL

But suddenly?

THE GIRL

(SNAPPING COYLY OUT OF HER SULKING.) Button up by yourself, sir. (CROSSING DOWN LEFT CENTER AREA IV, UNFURLING HER BODY.) The water lay motionless in the pools. The wind itself was awaiting an order to unfurl the flags. . . .

THE GENERAL

(POINTING TO HIS UNBOOTED FEET.) But suddenly?

THE GIRL

Suddenly? Eh? Suddenly? (TURNING TO HIM, UNSURE OF WHAT IS NEXT, SHE SEEMS TO BE TRYING TO FIND THE RIGHT WORDS. THEN REMEMBERING PROCEDURE, SHE RUNS, PULLS THE GENERAL RIGHT AND SWINGS HIM IN FRONT OF HERSELF INTO THE CHAIR. SHE BEGINS TO HELP HIM WITH HIS LEFT BOOT, BUT HE ENDS UP PUTTING BOTH ON BY HIMSELF AS THE PONY GETS ENTHRALLED WITH HER REENACTMENT OF THE EVENT SHE DESCRIBES.) Ah yes, suddenly all was fire and sword! Widows! Miles of crepe had to be woven to put on the standards. The mothers and wives remained dry-eyed behind their veils. The bells came clattering down the bombed towers. (CROSSING TO THE RIGHT OF THE CHAIR, DOWN RIGHT AREA II.) As I rounded a corner I was frightened by a blue cloth. I reared, but, (THE GENERAL REACHES OUT HIS RIGHT HAND ON HER BACK.) steadied by your gentle and masterful hand, I ceased to quiver. (RISING, LEANING BACKWARDS ON HIM.) I started forward again. How I loved you, my hero!

THE GENERAL

But . . . the dead? Weren't there any dead?

THE GIRL

The soldiers died kissing the standard. You were all victory and kindness. (CROSSES BEHIND THE CHAIR TO STEP UNIT 2 TO GET MAKEUP.) One evening, remember. . . .

THE GENERAL

I was so mild that I began to snow. To snow on my men, to shroud them in the softest of winding-sheets. To snow. (JUMPS UP, NOW WITH CROP IN OUTSTRETCHED RIGHT ARM, FACING DOWN LEFT.) Moskova!

THE GIRL

(FROM BEHIND, THE PONY THROWS HIM BACK DOWN IN THE CHAIR. THROUGH THE REMAINDER OF THE SPEECH SHE APPLIES GARISH MAKEUP TO HIS FACE, DANCING AROUND THE CHAIR.) Splinters of shell had gashed the lemons. Now death was in action. She moved nimbly from one to the other, deepening a wound, dimming an eye, tearing off an arm, opening an artery, discolouring a face, cutting short a cry, a song. Death was ready to drop. Finally, exhausted, herself dead with fatigue (RESTING HER BACK AND HEAD ON HIS RIGHT ARM, SHE IS DOWN RIGHT AREA II.) she grew drowsy and rested lightly on your shoulder, where she fell asleep.

THE GENERAL

(DRUNK WITH JOY.) Stop, stop, it's not time for that yet, but I feel it'll be magnificent. (THE PONY PRANCES LEFT DOWN THE STEPS OF AREA III TO DOWN CENTER AREA IV AND CONTINUES PRANCING.) The cross-belt? Good. (HE CROSSES DOWN RIGHT FACING RIGHT, LOOKING AT HIMSELF IN AN IMAGINARY MIRROR, PUTS ON HIS HAT, SALUTES HIMSELF.) Austerlitz! General! Man of war and in full regalia, behold me in my pure appearance. (TURNING LEFT, CROSSES TWO STEPS.) Nothing, no contingent trails behind me. I appear purely and simply. (CROSSES DOWN CENTER STEPS 3 AND 4 TO DOWN CENTER STEP 5.) If I went through wars without dying, went through sufferings without dying, if I was promoted, without dying, it was for this minute close to death. (SUDDENLY HE STOPS; HE SEEMS TROUBLED BY AN IDEA.) Tell me, Dove?

THE GIRL

What is it, sir?

THE GENERAL

What's the Chief of Police been doing? (THE GIRL SHAKES HER HEAD.) Nothing? Still nothing? (TAKES TWO STEPS RIGHT, TAPPING HIS CROP IN HIS LEFT HAND.) In short, everything slips through his fingers. (TURNS LEFT TO HER.) And what about us, are we wasting our time?

THE GIRL

(IMPERIOUSLY, CROSSES UP RIGHT TO HIM; SHE IS UP RIGHT CENTER AREA IV ON HIS LEFT. SHE IS STILL PRANCING.) Not at all. And, in any case, it's no business of ours. Continue. You were saying: for this minute close to death . . . and then?

THE GENERAL

(HESITATING.) . . . close to death . . . where I shall be nothing, though reflected ad infinitum in these mirrors, nothing but my image. . . .
 (SHE PRANCES TO CENTER AREA IV. THE GENERAL CROSSES TO HER. SHE GOES TO HER KNEES AS HE STEPS ASTRIDE HER FROM BEHIND AND THEY SWAY TO THE RHYTHM OF THE TEXT.) Quite right, comb your mane. Curry yourself. I require a well-groomed filly. So, in a little while, to the blare of trumpets, we shall descend--I on your back--to death and glory, for I am about to die. It is indeed a descent to the grave. . . .

THE GIRL

(THE SWAYING STOPS.) But, sir, you've been dead since yesterday.

THE GENERAL

I know . . . but a formal and picturesque descent, by unexpected stairways. . . .

THE GIRL

You are a dead general, but an eloquent one. (SHE STANDS ON ALL FOURS, HEAD DOWN.)

THE GENERAL

Because I'm dead, prating horse. What is now speaking, and so beautifully, is Example. I am now only the image of my former self. Your turn, now. Lower your head and hide your eyes, for I want to be a general in solitude. Not even for myself, but for my image, and my image for its image, and so on. In short, we'll be among equals. Dove, are you ready? (THE GIRL NODS.) Come now. Put on your bay dress, horse, my fine Arab steed. (WHACKING HER FROM BEHIND WITH HIS CROP AS HE BEGINS TO CROSS RIGHT.) We're off! (HE STOPS AND DRAMATICALLY SALUTES TO INVISIBLE MIRRORS.) Farewell, general! (HE CROSSES RIGHT UP TO THE CHAIR, SITS PROPPED WITH HEAD AND FEET IN A RIGID DIAGONAL POSITION, HAT AND ARMS ON HIS CHEST. THE PONY PLACES HERSELF RIGHT CENTER AREA IV IN A HORIZONTAL LINE WITH HIM, THEY ARE BOTH FACING DOWN LEFT. SHE IS SLOWLY PRANCING AS IF PULLING HIS FUNERAL CARRIAGE.)

THE GIRL

The procession has begun. . . . We're passing through the City. . . . We're going along the river. I'm sad. . . . The sky is overcast. The nation weeps for that splendid hero who died in battle. . . .

THE GENERAL

(STARTING.) Dove!

THE GIRL

(TURNING AROUND, IN TEARS.) Sir?

THE GENERAL

Add that I died with my boots on! (HE THEN RESUMES HIS POSE.)

THE GIRL

My hero died with his boots on! The procession continues. Your aides-de-camp precede me. . . . Then come I, Dove, your war-horse. . . . The military band plays a funeral march. . . . (MARCHING IN PLACE, THE GIRL SINGS CHOPIN'S FUNERAL MARCH. THE LIGHTS SLOWLY FADE, THE LAST GLIMMER BEING A STREAK OF ORANGE SHINING FROM STAGE LEFT ACROSS THE STAGE ON THE TWO FIGURES.)

SCENE FOUR

(A SICKLY GREEN LIGHT FADES UP ON CENTER AND LEFT CENTER AREA IV. A SLOVENLY THIN MAN ENTERS WITH A BUNCH OF ARTIFICIAL FLOWERS, DRESSED AS A TRAMP, FROM STAGE LEFT, CROSSES TO LEFT CENTER AREA IV AND WAITS A BEAT. A WHORE WITH A FLOWING BOA ENTERS UNSEEN FROM UP RIGHT AREA IX AND CROSSES DOWN STEP UNIT 10 OF AREA IV AND BECOMES VISIBLE AS SHE APPROACHES THE MAN. SHE STANDS THREE FEET TO THE MAN'S RIGHT. THE GIRL ROUGHLY PUTS A WIG, PRIMARILY BALD BUT WITH SPARSE HAIRS, ONTO THE MAN'S HEAD. THE MAN FALLS TO HIS KNEES WITH HER MOTIONS, PLEASURE ON HIS FACE. HE THEN LEANS RIGHT ON HIS KNEES TO OFFER THE FLOWERS TO THE GIRL WITH HIS RIGHT HAND. THE GIRL WHIPS THE FLOWERS FROM HIS HAND WITH HER RIGHT HAND AND TURNS CENTER TO EXIT UPSTAGE. MACHINE GUN FIRE. THE MAN TOUCHES THE WIG.

THE MAN

What about the lice?

THE GIRL

(OVER HER LEFT SHOULDER, VERY COARSELY.) They're there. (THE GIRL EXITS UPSTAGE AS THE MAN, WITH GROVELLING SOUNDS OF DELIGHT, CRAWLS UP LEFT AND CRAWLS THROUGH AN INVISIBLE OPENING UNDER PLATFORM AREA X, UP RIGHT CENTER IV.)

SCENE FIVE

(MADAME IRMA'S ROOM, AREAS VI, X, XI, XII, AND XIII. A WOODEN DESK IS PLACED RIGHT AREA XI ANGLED UPSTAGE TOWARD UP CENTER WITH A WOODEN CHAIR ON ITS LEFT. ON THE DESK IS A HAND MIRROR. THERE IS A LARGE ARMCHAIR PLACED LEFT CENTER AREA XI, FACING CENTER AREA XI, AND A BED UPSTAGE AREA

XII, PARALLEL TO THE AUDIENCE. THERE ARE ENTRANCES UP RIGHT AREA XI, UP RIGHT AREA XII, AND FROM STAGE LEFT AT UP AREA XIII. THE CONFITEOR OF THE MASS IS HEARD FOR 40 SECONDS, THEN MACHINE GUN FIRE AND THE LIGHTS FADE UP, REVEALING CARMEN DRESSED IN FLOWING LAYERS OF BLUE-GREEN SITTING IN THE CHAIR WITH A LEDGER. MADAME IRMA SITS AT HER DRESSING TABLE/DESK WITH HER DAY'S INTAKE.)

CARMEN

(COUNTING.) The bishop, twenty . . . the judge, twenty . . . (SHE RAISES HER HEAD.) No, Madame, nothing yet. No Chief of Police.

IRMA

(IRRITATED.) He's going to turn up, if he turns up . . . fit to be tied! And yet!--

CARMEN

Yes, I know: it takes all kinds to make a world. But no Chief of Police. (SHE COUNTS AGAIN.) The general, twenty . . . the sailor, twenty . . . the brat, thirty. . . .

IRMA

I've told you, Carmen, I don't like that. And I demand respect for the visitors. Vi-si-tors! I don't allow myself--I myself (SHE STRESSES THE WORD "I".)--even to refer to them as clients. And yet! . . . (SHE FLASHILY SNAPS THE SHEAF OF FRESH BANKNOTES THAT SHE HAS IN HER HANDS.)

CARMEN

(SEVERELY; SHE HAS TURNED AROUND AND IS GLARING AT IRMA.) For you, yes: cash and refinement.

IRMA

(TRYING TO BE CONCILIATORY, RISES, CROSSING TO CARMEN'S RIGHT.) Those eyes! Don't be unjust. You've been irritable for some time now. I realize we're on edge because of what's going on, but things will quiet down. The sun will come out again. (CROSSING CENTER AREA XI.) George. . . .

CARMEN

Ah, him!

IRMA

Don't sneer at the Chief of Police. If not for him we'd be in a fine mess. Yes, we, because you're tied up with me. And with him. (A LONG PAUSE, AS SHE CROSSES BEHIND THE CHAIR TO CARMEN'S LEFT.) What disturbs me most is your sadness. (WISELY.) You've changed, Carmen.

CARMEN

(SENSING THE MADAME STALKING HER PREY, CROSSING TO THE DESK, SHE THEN SITS.) There's nothing much left for me to do here, Mme. Irma.

IRMA

(DISCONCERTED.) But . . . (CROSSING TO DIRECTLY BEHIND CARMEN, CENTER AREA XI.) I've put you in charge of my bookkeeping. You sit down at my desk and all at once my entire life opens out before you. I haven't a secret left, and you're not happy?

CARMEN

Of course, I'm grateful to you for your confidence, but . . . it's not the same thing.

IRMA

Do you miss "that," Carmen? (CARMEN IS SILENT. CROSSING LEFT TO LEFT AREA XI.) Come, come, Carmen, when you mounted the snow-covered rock with the yellow paper rose-bush--by the way, I'm going to have to store that in the cellar--and when the miraculously-healed leper swooned at the sight of you, you didn't take yourself seriously, did you, Carmen? (BRIEF SILENCE.)

CARMEN

(TURNING TO MADAME IRMA.) When our sessions are over, Madame, you never allow anyone to talk about them. So you have no idea of how we really feel. (TURNING AWAY.) But if you ever once put on the dress and the blue veil, or if you were the unbuttoned penitent, or the general's mare, or the country girl tumbled in the hay. . . .

IRMA

(SHOCKED.) Me!

CARMEN

(CROSSING LEFT TO CONFRONT MADAME IRMA.) Yes you, Madame Irma. Or the maid in a pink apron, or the archduchess deflowered by the policeman, or . . . but I'm not going to run through the whole list . . . you'd know what that does to a girl's soul, and that she's got to use a little irony in self-defence. But no, you don't even want us to talk about it among ourselves. You're afraid of a smile, of a joke.

IRMA

(VERY SEVERELY.) True, I don't allow any joking. A giggle, or even a smile, spoils everything. A smile means doubt. The clients want sober ceremonies. My house is a severe place. You're allowed to play cards.

CARMEN

Then don't be surprised that we're sad. (A PAUSE.) I'm thinking of my daughter. (A BELL BUZZES, SIGNALLING THAT ONE OF IRMA'S GIRLS IS CALLING HER TO A VIEW-FINDER THAT OVERSEES THE WORKINGS OF THE ENTIRE BROTHEL. IRMA CROSSES DOWN TO DOWN LEFT CENTER AND LOOKS INTO THE VIEW-FINDER NOT VISIBLE TO THE AUDIENCE, SPREADING OVERHEAD THE STAGE LENGTH OF AREA XI, AS SHE TALKS.)

IRMA

Are you still set on going to see her? Don't be a fool. Between this place and the nursery in the country there's fire and water, rebellion and bullets. I even wonder whether. . . . (THE BELL BUZZES AGAIN. SHE LOOKS TO THE RIGHT SECTION OF THE VIEW-FINDER.) . . . whether they didn't get George on the way. Though a Chief of Police knows how to take care of himself. (SHE LOOKS AT A WATCH THAT SHE TAKES FROM HER BOSOM, CROSSING UP TO UP LEFT OF CHAIR.) He's late. (SHE LOOKS ANXIOUS.) Or else he hasn't dared to come out. (CROSSING BACK TO HER DESK. CARMEN CROSSES UP TO THE CHAIR AND SITS.) . . . Let's get back to the accounts, shall we?

CARMEN

In all, counting the sailor and the simple jobs, it comes to three hundred and twenty.

IRMA

(CROSSING DOWN CENTER.) Splendid! The more killing there is in the working class districts, the more the men roll into my studios.

CARMEN

The men?

IRMA

(AFTER A PAUSE.) Some men. Drawn by my mirrors and chandeliers, always the same ones. As for the others, heroism takes the place of women.

CARMEN

(BITTERLY.) Women?

IRMA

(CROSSES UP TO CARMEN, PULLS HER UP AND FORWARD SO THEY FACE EACH OTHER.) What shall I call you, my big, long, sterile girls? Their seed never ripens in you, and yet . . . if you weren't there?

CARMEN

You have your revels, Mme. Irma.

IRMA

Yes, my revels and . . . (CROSSING DOWN LEFT.) my jewels. (DREAMILY.)
I have my jewels . . . and you, the orgies of your heart . . .

CARMEN

(CROSSING DOWN TO IRMA'S RIGHT.) . . . they don't help matters, Madame.
(TURNING DOWN CENTER AREA XI, AWAY FROM IRMA.) My daughter loves me.

IRMA

(CROSSING AROUND BEHIND HER TO CARMEN'S RIGHT. CARMEN SENSES SHE IS THE
PREY.) You're the fairy godmother who comes to see her with toys and per-
fumes. She pictures you in Heaven. (BURSTING OUT LAUGHING.) Ah, that's
the limit--to think there's someone for whom my brothel--which is Hell--
is Heaven! (SHE LAUGHS.) Are you going to make a whore of her later on?

CARMEN

Mme. Irma!

IRMA

That's right! I ought to leave you to your secret brothel, your precious
pink cat-house, your soulful whore-house. . . . You think I'm cruel?
(CROSSES TO HER DESK, TURNS FRONT.) This rebellion is getting me down,
too. I have moments of fear and panic. . . . It looks to me as if the
aim of the rebellion weren't to capture the Royal Palace, but to sack my
studios. (TURNS CENTER TO FACE CARMEN.) I'm afraid, Carmen. I've tried
everything, even prayer. (SHE SMILES PAINFULLY.) Like your miraculously-
healed leper. (CROSSES TO CARMEN'S RIGHT.) Have I wounded you?

CARMEN

(WITH DECISION. IRMA STEPS BACK TO HER DESK.) Twice a week, on Tuesdays
and Fridays, I had to be the Immaculate Conception of Lourdes and appear
to a bank-clerk of the trust company. For you it meant money in the bank
and justified your brothel, for me it was. . . .

IRMA

(ASTONISHED.) You agreed to it. You didn't seem to mind it.

CARMEN

(CROSSING TO IRMA.) Mind it! I was happy.

IRMA

Well? Where's the harm?

CARMEN

(CROSSING DOWN RIGHT AREA XI.) I saw the effect I had on my bank-clerk. I saw his state of terror, how he'd break out in a sweat, I heard the rattle in his throat. . . .

IRMA

That'll do. (CROSSES TO CHAIR AND SITS. A PAUSE AS SHE THINKS FOR HER NEXT ATTACK.) He doesn't come any more. I wonder why? Maybe the danger. Maybe his wife found out. (PAUSE.) Or maybe he's dead. Attend to my accounts.

CARMEN

They'll never replace my apparition. It had become as real as at Lourdes. (CROSSING UP TO DESK AND SITTING.) Everything inside me now yearns for my daughter. She's in a real garden. . . .

IRMA

You'll have a hard time getting to her, and before long the garden will be in your heart.

CARMEN

Be quiet.

IRMA

(INEXORABLY.) The city is full of corpses. All the roads are cut off. Even the peasants are going over to the rebels. Contagion? The rebellion is an epidemic. It has the same fatal and sacred character. In any case, we're going to find ourselves more and more isolated. The rebels have it in for the Clergy, for the Army, for the Magistracy, for me, Irma, a bawd and madame of a whore-house. As for you, you'll be killed, disembowelled, and your daughter will be adopted by some virtuous rebel. (SHE SHUDDERS. SUDDENLY A BUZZ. IRMA RUNS TO THE APPARATUS, LOOKS UP AND LISTENS AS BEFORE.) Studio 24, Chamber of the Sands. What's going on? (SHE WATCHES VERY ATTENTIVELY. A LONG PAUSE.)

CARMEN

(SHE HAS GONE BACK TO THE ACCOUNTS. WITHOUT RAISING HER HEAD.) The Foreign Legion?

IRMA

(WITH HER EYES STILL GLUED TO THE APPARATUS.) Yes. It's the heroic Legionnaire falling to the sand. What an idea, having himself shot as if by an Arab with a dart, no less, and dying--if you want to call it that!--at attention on a sandpile! (A SILENCE. SHE WATCHES ATTENTIVELY.) Ah, Rachel's preparing a dressing for him, he has a happy look. (VERY MUCH INTERESTED.) I don't like that. Not one bit. I'm getting more and more worried about Rachel. She'd better not double-cross me the way Chantal did. (TURNING AROUND, TO CARMEN.) By the way, (CROSSES CAT-LIKE TO CENTER AREA XI.) no news of Chantal?

CARMEN

None.

IRMA

(BUZZING AGAIN. IRMA CROSSES DOWN LEFT.) False alarm. It's the plumber leaving.

CARMEN

Which one?

IRMA

The real one.

CARMEN

Which is the real one?

IRMA

The one who repairs the plumbing.

CARMEN

Is the other one fake?

IRMA

(IRMA GLARES AT CARMEN; CARMEN SMILES, SHE HAS WON ONE SMALL BATTLE. IRMA TURNS ATTENTION BACK TO THE VIEW-FINDER.) Ah, I told you so: the three or four drops of blood from his ear have inspired him. Now he's having her pamper him. Tomorrow morning he'll be in fine fettle for going to his Embassy.

CARMEN

He's married, isn't he?

IRMA

(PAUSE, IRMA SLOWLY CROSSES TO CARMEN, VERY BUSINESSLIKE. SHE IS CENTER AREA XI, FACING FRONT.) As a rule, I don't like to talk about the private life of my visitors. The Grand Balcony has a world-wide reputation. It's the most artful, yet the most decent house of illusions. . . .

CARMEN

(TURNING TO HER.) Decent?

IRMA

(TO CARMEN.) Discreet. But I'll be frank with you. Most of them are married. (PAUSE.)

CARMEN

When they're with their wives, whom they love, do they keep a tiny, small-scale version of the revels in the brothel. . . .

IRMA

(REPRIMANDING HER.) Carmen!

CARMEN

Excuse me, Madame . . . in a house of illusions.

IRMA

It's possible, child. No doubt they do. (CROSSING LEFT CENTER, GETTING CARRIED AWAY WITH HER ERUDITION.) Like an imperceptible light in the imperceptible window of an imperceptible castle that they can enlarge instantly whenever they feel like going there to relax. (MACHINE GUN FIRE. SNAPPING OUT HER TRANCE. SHE LOOKS AROUND ANXIOUSLY.) You hear that? They're approaching.

CARMEN

(CONTINUING HER TRAIN OF THOUGHT.) All the same, it must be nice in a real house.

IRMA

(MORE AND MORE FRIGHTENED.) They'll succeed in surrounding the house before George arrives.

CARMEN

(STILL PENSIVE.) In a real house, it must be nice. . . .

IRMA

Carmen, if my girls start bothering their heads about such things, it'll be the ruin of the brothel. I really think you miss your apparition. (CROSSES TO CARMEN'S LEFT, OVER HER BACK AS CARMEN FACES DOWN RIGHT.) Look, I can do something for you. I did promise it to Regina, but I offer it to you. Someone rang me up yesterday and asked for a Saint Theresa. . . . (A PAUSE.) Ah, obviously, it's a come-down from the Immaculate Conception to Saint Theresa, but it's not bad either. . . . (A PAUSE.) Well, what do you say? It's for a banker. Very clean, you know. Not demanding. It's yours. If the rebels are crushed, naturally.

CARMEN

I liked my dress and veil and rose-bush.

IRMA

There's a rose-bush in the "Saint Theresa" too. Think it over. (A PAUSE, AS SHE CROSSES TO HER CHAIR AND SITS.)

CARMEN

And what'll the authentic detail be?

IRMA

The ring. He's got it all worked out. The wedding ring every nun wears, as a bride of God. (CARMEN MAKES A GESTURE OF ASTONISHMENT.) That's so. That's how he'll know he's dealing with a real nun.

CARMEN

(SLOWLY CROSSING UP LEFT TOWARD IRMA.) What about the fake detail?

IRMA

It's always the same: black lace under the homespun skirt. Well, how about it? You have the kind of gentleness he likes. He'll be pleased.

CARMEN

(SITS ON RIGHT ARM OF CHAIR, HER LEFT ARM OVER THE BACK OF THE CHAIR AS IF AROUND IRMA.) It's really very kind of you, to think of him.

IRMA

I'm thinking of you.

CARMEN

You're so kind, Madame. The thing to be said for your house is that it

brings consolation. You set up and prepare their secret theatres. . . . You've got your feet on the ground. The proof is that you rake in the money. Whereas they . . . their awakening must be brutal.

IRMA

You miss the entire point. When it's over, their minds are clear. I can tell from their eyes. Suddenly they understand mathematics. They love their children and their country. Like you.

CARMEN

(RISING, PUFFING HERSELF UP.) I'm the daughter of a high-ranking officer.

IRMA

I know. There always has to be one in a brothel. (RISING, CROSSING TO HER DESK SEEMINGLY TO LOOK AT PAPERS, BUT TO SET CARMEN UP FOR ANOTHER MENTAL TRICK.) But bear in mind that General, Bishop and Judge are, in real life. . . .

CARMEN

Which are you talking about?

IRMA

Real ones.

CARMEN

Which are real? The ones here?

IRMA

No. The others. In real life they're props of a display that they have to drag in the mud of the real and commonplace. Here, (CROSSES TO CARMEN'S RIGHT.) Comedy and Appearance remain pure, and the Revels intact.

CARMEN

The revels that I indulge in. . . .

IRMA

(INTERRUPTING HER.) I know what they are: your revels are to forget theirs.

CARMEN

Do you blame me for that?

IRMA

And theirs are to forget yours. They, too, love their children. Afterwards. (BUZZING AS BEFORE. IRMA CROSSES DOWN LEFT AREA XI TO LOOK INTO THE VIEW-FINDER. CARMEN FOLLOWS HER STANDING DOWN CENTER AREA XI.)

CARMEN

The Chief of Police?

IRMA

(DESCRIBING THE SCENE.) No. The waiter has arrived. He's going to start complaining again . . . there he goes, he's flaring up because Elyane is handing him a white apron.

CARMEN

I warned you. He wants a pink one.

IRMA

They all want everything to be as true as possible. . . . Minus something indefinable, so that it won't be true. (CARMEN CROSSES BACK TO THE CHAIR AND SITS. IRMA CROSSES RIGHT TO DOWN RIGHT CENTER AND CHANGES HER TONE. SHE GRADUALLY WORKS HERSELF INTO THE EMPYREAN.) Carmen, it was I who decided to call my establishment a house of illusions, but I'm only the manager. Each individual brings his own scenario, perfectly thought out. I merely rent the hall and furnish the props, actors and actresses. My dear, I've succeeded in lifting it from the ground--I unloosed it long ago and it's flying (CROSSING, SWIRLING UP LEFT, NEXT TO CARMEN, FACING LEFT.) and I with it. Well my darling . . . (TURNING AROUND TO LOOK AT CARMEN.) may I say something tender--every madame always, traditionally, has a slight partiality for one of her girls . . .

CARMEN

I had notice, Madame, and I too, at times. . . . (SHE LOOKS UP AT IRMA LANGUIDLY AND RAISES HER LEFT ARM OFF THE ARM REST SLOWLY UP TO TOUCH MADAME IRMA'S HAND.)

IRMA

I have a strange feeling, Carmen. (A LONG PAUSE, THEN SHE JERKS HER HAND AWAY, RIGHT BEFORE CARMEN TOUCHES IT.) But let's continue. Darling, (CROSSING BEHIND THE CHAIR TO RIGHT OF IT.) when, in the secrecy of my heart, I call myself, but with great precision, a keeper of a bawdy-house, the house really does take off, leaves the earth, sails in the sky. Darling, (SUDDENLY LYRICAL, CROSSING LEFT TO DOWN RIGHT AREA XII, ENVISIONING HER STUDIOS IN THE OVERHEAD VIEW-FINDER.) everything flies off--chandeliers, mirrors, carpets, pianos, caryatids and my studios, my famous studios: (CROSSES QUICKLY DOWN RIGHT OFF AREA XII TO CENTER AREA

X, THEN CROSSES A STEP LEFT WITH DESCRIPTION OF EACH OF THE FOLLOWING STUDIOS.) the Hay Studio, hung with rustic scenes, the Studio of the Hangings, spattered with blood and tears, the Studio of State, the Urinal Studio, the Amphitrite Studio, the Moonlight Studio, everything flies off. (STOPS LEFT AREA VI, SPEAKS OVER HER RIGHT SHOULDER, THEN CROSSES RIGHT QUICKLY TO CENTER AREA X.) To continue: studios, girls, . . . (SHE THINKS AGAIN.) Oh! I was forgetting, the most beautiful of all, ultimate adornment, crown of the edifice--if the construction of it is ever completed. The Funeral Studio, my Studio of Solemn Death, the Tomb! The Mausoleum Studio. . . . To continue: (CROSSING TO LEFT AREA VI, STEPPING AS SHE THINKS OF EACH ITEM.) studios, girls, crystals, laces, balconies, everything takes it on the lam, rises up and (TURNING RIGHT, ARMS OVERHEAD, IN THE EMPYREAN. SHE HALTS ON HER LAST WORDS AS SHE STANDS FACING CARMEN WHO HAS CROSSED FROM THE CHAIR TO CENTER AREA X DURING IRMA'S SPEECH.) carries me off! (A LONG PAUSE. THE TWO WOMEN ARE STANDING MOTIONLESS, FACING EACH OTHER.)

CARMEN

How well you speak.

IRMA

(MODESTLY, TURNING HER HEAD DOWN.) I went through elementary school.

CARMEN

So I assumed. (ONE STEP UP RIGHT.) My father, the artillery colonel. . . .

IRMA

(CORRECTING HER SHARPLY.) You mean cavalry, my dear.

CARMEN

Excuse me. That's right. The cavalry colonel wanted me to have an education. Alas. . . . As for you, you've been successful. You've been able to surround your loveliness with a sumptuous theatre, (ONE STEP UP RIGHT, GESTURING TO THE ROOM IN DESCRIPTION.) a gala, the splendours of which envelop you and hide you from the world. Your whoredom required such pomp. (ONE STEP UP RIGHT.) But what about me, am I to have only myself and be only myself? No, Madame, thanks to vice and men's heart-ache, I too have had my moment of glory! (CROSSING UP STEP UNIT 11 TO DOWN CENTER AREA XI.) With the receiver at your ear, you could see me through the viewer, standing erect, (ACTING OUT HER WORDS.) sovereign and kind, maternal yet feminine, with my heel on the cardboard snake and the pink paper-roses. You could also see the clerk from the trust company kneeling before me and swooning when I appeared to him. Unfortunately he had his back to you and so you weren't aware of the ecstasy on his face and the wild pounding of my heart. My blue veil, my blue robe, my blue apron, my blue eyes. . . .

IRMA

They're hazel.

CARMEN

They were blue for him. (CONTINUING, IN THE EMPYREAN.) For him I was Heaven in person descending on his brow. He hymned me, (CROSSING ONE STEP RIGHT TO SUPPORT THE FOLLOWING LINES.) fusing me with his beloved colour, and when he carried me to bed, it was into the blue that he penetrated. But I won't ever appear to him again.

IRMA

I've offered you Saint Theresa.

CARMEN

I'm not prepared, Mme. Irma. One has to know what the client requires. Has everything been worked out?

IRMA

(CROSSING UP STEP UNIT 11, TO CARMEN'S LEFT. SHE IS DOWN CENTER AREA XI.) Every where should be able--excuse me, but since we've gone so far, let's talk man to man--every where should be able to handle any situation.

CARMEN

(CROSSING TO THE DESK CHAIR, FIRMLY REPLYING.) I'm one of your whores, Mme. Irma, and one of your best. I boast of it. In the course of an evening, I can . . .

IRMA

I'm aware of your feats. But when you start glorifying yourself as soon as you hear the word whore, which you flaunt as if it were a title, it's not quite the same as when I use the word to designate a function. (CROSSES UP AND PULLS CARMEN INTO HER ARMS, CARMEN'S BACK TO HER FRONT, SPEAKING OVER CARMEN'S LEFT SHOULDER. THEY ARE CENTER AREA XI.) But you're right, darling, to extol your profession and to glory in it. Make it shine. Let it illuminate you, if that's the only thing you have. (TENDERLY.) I'll do all I can to help you. . . . You're not only the purest jewel of all my girls, you're the one on whom I bestow all my tenderness. But stay with me. . . . (SQUEEZING HER TIGHTER, LOOKING AROUND.) Death--the real thing--is at my door, it's beneath my windows. . . . (MACHINE GUN FIRE.) You hear?

CARMEN

The Army is fighting bravely.

IRMA

(FORGETTING CARMEN FOR A MOMENT TO REASON MATTERS OUT, CROSSING LEFT TO DOWN LEFT CENTER.) And the Rebels even more bravely. There's no price on my head. No, that would be too much to expect, but it's known that I serve supper to prominent people. (CROSSES UP TO LEFT OF CARMEN.) So they're out to get me. And there are no men in the house.

CARMEN

(SITS IN THE DESK CHAIR.) There's Arthur.

IRMA

Are you trying to be funny? He's no man, he's my stage-prop. Besides, as soon as his session is over, I'll send him to look for George.

CARMEN

Assuming the worst. . . .

IRMA

If the rebels win? I'm a goner. (PACES UP LEFT CENTER AREA XI BEHIND THE RIGHT PART OF CHAIR.) They're workers. Without imagination. Prudish and maybe chaste.

CARMEN

It won't take them long to get used to debauchery. Once they're a little bored. . . .

IRMA

(TWO STEPS DOWN TO CENTER AREA XI.) You're wrong. They're dreaming of murdering us. (CROSSING RIGHT TO RIGHT OF CARMEN, SHE BEGINS TO FIND THRILL IN WHAT MAY COME.) We'll have a lovely death, Carmen. It will be terrible and sumptuous. They may break into my studios, shatter the crystals, tear the brocades and slit our throats. . . .

CARMEN

They'll take pity. . . .

IRMA

They'll thrill at the thought that their fury is sacrilegious. They'll destroy us by fire and sword. It'll be very beautiful. We oughtn't to wish for any other kind of end, and you, (TRYING TO MAKE CARMEN FEEL PITY, PLAYING ON HER SYMPATHY, TURNING LEFT AWAY FROM HER.) you're thinking of leaving. . . .

CARMEN

(RISING.) But Mme. Irma. . . .

IRMA

I offer you the flaming robe of Saint Theresa. And you hesitate? I offer you the very finest of deaths, and you hesitate?

CARMEN

I'm devoted to you.

IRMA

(SHE HAS WON CARMEN, TAKES HER IN HER ARMS. THEY ARE RIGHT OF CENTER AREA XI, CHEEK TO CHEEK, FACING FRONT.) I'll teach you figures? The wonderful figures that we'll spend nights together calligraphing, and we shall die together. Death? It's certain death, but with what speed and with what dash! . . . (A DEFEATING THOUGHT OCCURS AND SHE TURNS OUT FROM HER EMBRACE.) Unless George is still all-powerful. . . . And above all if he can get through the horde and come and save us. (A DEEP SIGH.) Now come and dress me. (CROSSES LEFT TO DOWN RIGHT, COMPLETELY BREAKING WITH HER PREVIOUS MOOD.) Arthur's session must be over. He'll be along in a minute. . . . Dress me.

CARMEN

What are you wearing.

IRMA

My negligé. (CARMEN CROSSES TO THE OPENING UP RIGHT AREA XI IN ORDER TO GET THE NEGLIGE FROM OFFSTAGE. IRMA'S MIND HAS OBVIOUSLY BEEN PONDERING THE CORRECT APPROACH TO HER LINE OF QUESTIONING.) Tell me, Carmen, what about Chantal? . . .

CARMEN

(HALTED UP RIGHT BY IRMA'S QUESTION.) Madame?

IRMA

Yes. About Chantal, tell me, what do you know about her?

CARMEN

I've questioned all the girls. (CROSSING TO THE DESK, TAKING PAPERS OFF THE TOP, SHE IS RIGHT CENTER, HANDS THEM TO IRMA WHO SCARCELY SCANS THEM.) They've each prepared a little report. I'll let you have them. But I didn't get much out of them. There's no news about Chantal. They don't even know if she's still alive.

IRMA

But, tell me, you wouldn't have any scruples about it?

CARMEN

(TAKING ONE STEP LEFT TO CENTER AREA XI, SPEAKING AS IF TAKING VOWS.) None at all. Entering a brothel means rejecting the world. Here I am and here I stay. Your mirrors and orders and the passions are my reality.

IRMA

(CROSSING RIGHT TO DESK.) My jewels. They're the only things I have that are real. (TURNING LEFT, DIRECTLY.) Who's double-crossing? You're hesitating.

CARMEN

(CROSSING ONE STEP LEFT.) The girls all mistrust me. I collect their little report. I pass it on to you. You pass it on to the police. The police check on it. . . . Me, I know nothing.

IRMA

(CARMEN CROSSES UP LEFT TO GET HANDKERCHIEF FROM CLOSET BEHIND THE WALL.) You're cautious. Give me a handkerchief.

CARMEN

(CROSSING DOWN, BRINGING A LACE HANDKERCHIEF IN HER LEFT HAND TO IRMA'S LEFT.) Viewed from here, where men show their naked selves, life seems to me so remote, so profound, that it has all the unreality of a film or of the birth of Christ in the manger. (CROSSING TO LEFT AREA XI.) When I'm in a room with a man and he forgets himself so far as to say to me: "The arsenal will be taken tomorrow night," I feel as if I were reading an obscene scrawl. His act becomes as mad, as . . . voluminous as those described in a certain way on certain walls. . . . (TURNING RIGHT TO IRMA, THEN AWAY.) No, I'm not cautious. (DURING THIS SPEECH IRMA HAS UN-DRESSED OUT OF HER TWO-PIECE SUIT. CARMEN CROSSES RIGHT, GETS SUIT FROM IRMA, CROSSES UP LEFT, PUTS SUIT BACK IN DRESSING ROOM, CROSSES TO UP CENTER, POSING PENSIVELY RIGHT OF CHAIR. A KNOCKING. IRMA GIVES A START. SHE RUSHES DOWN LEFT AREA XI, CHECKS THAT THE APPARATUS IS OFF, CROSSES RIGHT TO DESK, PUSHES A BUTTON ON THE DOWNSTAGE TOP AND CHECKS TO MAKE SURE THIS HAS COVERED THE APPARATUS. IN THE COURSE OF THE SCENE WITH ARTHUR, CARMEN DRESSES IRMA, SO THAT THE LATTER IS READY JUST WHEN THE CHIEF OF POLICE ARRIVES.)

IRMA

(POSING, LEANING BACK ON DESK SUPPORTED ON LEFT FOOT, RIGHT FOOT OUT-STRETCHED, LEFT HAND ON BACK OF HER HEAD, A LA MAE WEST. SHE IS NOW IN HER UNDERGARMENTS, A BLACK FRENCH BRA, BLACK GARTER BELT AND HOSE, STILL

IN HER RED SHOES. SHE IS EXCITED IN ANTICIPATION.) Come in! (FROM STAGE LEFT AT UP AREA XIII ENTER THE EXECUTIONER, WHOM HEREAFTER WE SHALL CALL ARTHUR. CLASSICAL PIMP'S OUTFIT: LIGHT GREY SUIT, WHITE FELT HAT, FULL YELLOW CAPE. HE CROSSES RIGHT TO RIGHT CENTER AREA XI ACROSS AREA XII.)

IRMA

(RELAXING FROM HER POSE, TURNING RIGHT, INTO HER DESK, OBVIOUSLY ARTHUR IS NOT WHO SHE HAD HOPED FOR.) Is the session over? He went through it fast.

ARTHUR

Yes, the little geezer's buttoning up. He's pooped. Two sessions in half an hour. With all that shooting in the street, I wonder whether he'll get home. (HE IMITATES THE JUDGE IN SCENE TWO.) Minos judges you. . . . Minos weighs you. . . . Cerberus? Bow-wow! Bow-wow! (HE SHOWS HIS FANGS AND LAUGHS.) Hasn't the Chief of Police arrived?

IRMA

You went easy, I hope? Last time, the poor girl was laid up for two days. (CARMEN HAS BROUGHT THE NEGLIGE. IRMA CHANGES INTO THE NEGLIGE OF GREEN AND SILVER LAMÉ AND NET.)

ARTHUR

Don't pull that kind-hearted-whore stuff on me. (CROSSES UP RIGHT CENTER TO CHAIR, SITS.) Both last time and tonight she got what was coming to her: in dough and in wallops. Right on the line. The banker wants to see stripes on her back. So I stripe it.

IRMA

At least you don't get any pleasure out of it?

ARTHUR

Not with her. You're my only love. And a job's a job. I'm conscientious about my work.

IRMA

(STERNLY.) I'm not jealous of the girl, but I wouldn't want you to disable the personnel. It's getting harder and harder to replace.

ARTHUR

I tried a couple of times to draw marks on her back with purple paint, but it didn't work. The old guy inspects her when he arrives and insists I deliver her in good shape.

IRMA

(TURNS TO HIM.) Paint? Who gave you permission?

ARTHUR

(SHRUGGING HIS SHOULDERS.) What's one illusion more or less! I thought it was okay. But don't worry. (RISING, CROSSES ONE STEP LEFT, ACTS OUT HIS ROLE WITH THE TRIO, FLAGELLATING AND WATCHING.) Now I whip, I flagellate, she screams, and he crawls.

IRMA

(SITTING IN CHAIR, FACING DOWN RIGHT.) Tell her to scream a bit lower. The house is being watched.

ARTHUR

The Bishop's less dangerous. He's satisfied with pardoning sins.

CARMEN

(BEGINNING TO CROSS TO BED, UP AREA XII, CROSSING TO DOWN LEFT AREA XI.) Yes, but he expects you to commit them. No, the best of the lot is the one you tie up, spank, whip and soothe, and then he snores.

ARTHUR

(JUMPS DOWN TO LEFT OF CARMEN, RIGHT CENTER AREA XII, GRABS HER, HIS LEFT ARM AROUND HER CLUTCHING HER RIGHT BREAST.) Do you cuddle him? You? Do you give him your breast?

CARMEN

(CURTLY, PUSHING HIM AWAY.) I do my job right. (CROSSES LEFT TO CENTER AREA XII, TURNS BACK TO ARTHUR.) And in any case, Mr. Arthur, you're wearing an outfit that doesn't allow you to joke. The pimp has a grin, never a smile. (CROSSES UP TO BED, SITS CENTER AND BEGINS PLAYING SOLITAIRE. A PACK OF CARDS HAS BEEN SITTING ON THE BED.)

IRMA

Leave Carmen alone. She's suffering.

ARTHUR

(CROSSING RIGHT TO BEHIND AND LEFT OF IRMA.) How much did we take in today?

IRMA

(ON THE DEFENSIVE.) Carmen and I haven't finished the accounts.

ARTHUR

(LEANING OVER IRMA FROM BEHIND HER; THEY ARE BOTH FACING DOWN RIGHT.) But I have. According to my calculations, it runs to a good two hundred. Two hundred! (CROSSING DOWN CENTER, DOWN STEP UNIT 11 TO CENTER AREA X, WAVING HIS ARMS TO EMPHASIZE HIS WORDS.) War, rebellion, shooting, frost, hail, rain, showers of shit, nothing stops them! People are killing each other on the streets, the joint's being watched, but all the same, (JUMPING UP STEP UNIT 11 TO CENTER AREA XI, CONFRONTING IRMA.) they come charging in. As for me, I've got you right at home, sweetie-pie, otherwise. . . .

IRMA

(BLUNTLY.) You'd be cowering in a cellar, scared stiff.

ARTHUR

(AMBIGUOUSLY, TURNING LEFT, AWAY, TRYING TO GOAD HER.) I'd do as the others do, my love. I'd wait to be saved by the Chief of Police. You're not forgetting my little percentage?

IRMA

I give you what you need.

ARTHUR

(CROSSING RIGHT TO KNEEL, DOWNSTAGE LEG ON FLOOR, BESIDE IRMA.) My love! I've ordered the silk shirts. And do you know what kind of silk? And what colour? Same as your. . . (RUBBING HER RIGHT THIGH, HIGHER AND HIGHER.)

IRMA

(QUICKLY RISES, PERTURBED, CROSSING DOWN RIGHT.) All right, cut it. Not in front of Carmen.

ARTHUR

(CROSSES RIGHT, INTO DESK, SEARCH FOR PAPERS WITH RIGHT HAND AS HE FACES FRONT.) Then it's O.K.?

IRMA

(WEAKENING.) Yes.

ARTHUR

How much?

IRMA

(REGAINING HER SELF-POSSESSION.) We'll see. I have to go over the accounts with Carmen. (WINNIGLY. CROSSES UP LEFT TO CHAIR AND SITS, STRAIGHTENING HER HOSE ON HER LEGS TO TEASE ARTHUR.) It'll be as much as I can. For the moment, you've absolutely got to go get George. . . .

ARTHUR

(WITH INSOLENT IRONY, CROSSING TWO STEPS LEFT.) I beg your pardon, my beloved?

IRMA

(CURTLY.) To go to meet Mr. George. To Police Headquarters, if necessary, and let him know that I'm relying only on him now.

ARTHUR

(SLIGHTLY UNEASY, CROSSING ONE STEP DOWN RIGHT.) You're kidding, I hope?
. . .

IRMA

(WITH SUDDEN STERNNESS.) The tone of my last remark should answer your question. (RISING, CROSSING RIGHT TO DOWN RIGHT OF DESK.) I'm no longer playing. Or, if you like, not the same role. And there's no longer any need for you to play the mean, soft-hearted pimp. Do as I tell you, but first take the atomizer. (TAKING ATOMIZER FROM DESK, JAMS IT INTO HIS OUTSTRETCHED HAND WITH HER RIGHT HAND.) And on your knees! (HE CROSSES DOWN STEP UNIT 11 TO UP LEFT AREA X, GETS ON HIS RIGHT KNEE, FACES OUT, ATOMIZER IN RIGHT HAND. IRMA CROSSES TO DOWN CENTER AREA XI, POSES. THROUGHOUT THE NEXT EXCHANGE, SHE TURNS AROUND IN PLACE TO GAIN THE FULL BENEFIT OF THE SUBSTANCE ARTHUR SPRAYS FROM THE ATOMIZER.)

ARTHUR

(STANDS, CROSSES DOWN LEFT THREE STEPS, STILL SPRAYING.) In the street? All by myself? . . . Me? . . .

IRMA

(STANDING IN FRONT OF HIM.) I've got to know what's happening to George. I can't remain unprotected.

ARTHUR

I'm here. . . .

IRMA

(SHRUGGING.) I've got to defend my jewels, my studios, my girls. The Chief of Police should have been her a half-hour ago. . . .

ARTHUR

(WOEFULLY.) Me in the streets? . . . But it's hailing . . . they're shooting. . . . (HE POINTS TO HIS SUIT, CROSSING LEFT TO RIGHT CENTER AREA VI.) And I got dressed up to stay here, to go walking through the corridors and look at myself in your mirrors. And also for you to see me dressed up as a pimp. . . . (CROSSES RIGHT QUICKLY TO UP LEFT CENTER X.) All I've got to protect me is my silk. . . .

IRMA

(TO ARTHUR.) Spray.

ARTHUR

(KNEELS AGAIN, SAME POSITION.) I'm not meant for outdoors. I've been living within your walls too long. Even my skin couldn't tolerate the fresh air . . . maybe if I had a veil. . . . What if I were recognized?
. . .

IRMA

(IRRITATED.) Take a revolver.

ARTHUR

But if I go out into the street. . . .

IRMA

(COMMANDINGLY, BUT GENTLY.) You're right. No revolver. But take off your hat and go where I tell you, and come back and let me know what's going on. You have a session this evening. Did you know?

ARTHUR

(TAKES OFF HAT QUICKLY WITH RIGHT HAND, PACES LEFT TO RIGHT AREA X.) This evening? Another one? What is it?

IRMA

I thought I told you: a corpse.

ARTHUR

(WITH DISGUST.) Wonderful. (CROSSING UP CENTER AREA X, UP STEP UNIT 11 TO CENTER AREA XI, FACING DOWN LEFT TO IRMA.) What am I supposed to do with it?

IRMA

Nothing. (CROSSES LEFT TO DESK, TURNS RIGHT TO ARTHUR WHO IS PACING IN

PLACE, SHIFTING FROM ONE FOOT TO THE OTHER.) You're to remain motionless, and you'll be buried. You'll be able to rest.

ARTHUR

(STOPS CENTER AREA XI, FINGER TO HEAD AS IN "AN IDEA.") Ah, because I'm the . . . ? (CROSSING RIGHT TO IRMA.) Who's the client? Someone new?

IRMA

(MYSTERIOUSLY.) A very important person, and stop asking questions. (PUSHES HIM LEFT.) Get going.

ARTHUR

(STARTING TO LEAVE, THEN HESITATING, CROSSES BACK TO IRMA, LIPS PUCKERED.) Don't I get a kiss?

IRMA

(MOVING PUCKERED LIPS UP TO HIS, THEN COYLY PULLS BACK.) When we come back. If we come back.

ARTHUR

(ON EXIT, CROSSING DOWN LEFT AREA XI, XII, OFF UP CENTER EXIT XIII.) Bitch! (WITHOUT KNOCKING, THE CHIEF OF POLICE ENTERS, UP LEFT XII, HEAVY FUR-LINED COAT, HAT, CIGAR. CARMEN STARTS RUNNING TO CALL ARTHUR BACK, BUT THE CHIEF OF POLICE CATCHES HER LEFT ARM WITH HIS RIGHT HAND, PULLS HER BACK. THEY ARE RIGHT CENTER AREA XII.)

THE CHIEF OF POLICE

No, no, stay, Carmen. I like having you around. As for the gigolo, let him find me. (CARMEN RETURNS TO SIT UP CENTER ON THE LOUNGE. HE KEEPS HIS HAT AND COAT ON, DOES NOT REMOVE THE CIGAR FROM HIS MOUTH, CROSSES UP TO CENTER AREA XI, BOWS TO IRMA AND KISSES HER HAND.)

IRMA

(BREATHLESSLY.) Put your hand here. (PUTS HIS RIGHT HAND ON HER RIGHT BREAST.) I'm all tense. I'm still wrought up. I knew you were on your way, which meant you were in danger. I was trembling . . . while perfuming myself. . . .

THE CHIEF OF POLICE

(WHILE CROSSING UP RIGHT BEHIND HER AND DOWN RIGHT TO THE DESK, TAKING OFF HIS GLOVES AND JACKET. IRMA COUNTERS LEFT, TURNING RIGHT TO HIM.) All right, that'll do. Let's cut the comedy. The situation's getting more and more serious--it's not desperate, but it will be before long--hap-pi-ly! The Royal Palace is surrounded. The Queen's in hiding. The

city---it's a miracle that I got through--the city's being ravaged. (CROSSING UP LEFT CENTER TO PUT JACKET ON CHAIR.) Out there the rebellion is tragic and joyous, (TURNS DOWN RIGHT TO IRMA WHO HAS COUNTERED LEFT WITH HIS CROSS.) not like this house where everything's dying a slow death. So, (CROSSES RIGHT TO DESK.) today's my day. By tonight I'll be in the grave or on a pedestal. So whether I love you or desire you is unimportant. How are things going at the moment?

IRMA

Marvellously. I had some great performances.

THE CHIEF OF POLICE

(IMPATIENTLY, STEPS LEFT TO HER.) What kind?

IRMA

Carmen has a talent for description. Ask her.

THE CHIEF OF POLICE

(CROSSING LEFT TO RIGHT CENTER AREA XII, RIGHT OF CARMEN. IRMA CROSSES UP LEFT CENTER AREA XI TO RIGHT OF CHAIR. TO CARMEN.) Tell me, Carmen, still . . . ?

CARMEN

(RISING, CROSSING CENTER.) Yes, sir, still. Still the pillars of the Empire: the Judge. . . .

THE CHIEF OF POLICE

(IRMA SITS IN CHAIR UP LEFT CENTER AREA XI AS THE CHIEF OF POLICE FOLLOWS CARMEN ON HER RIGHT AS SHE CROSSES DOWN CENTER AREA XII. IRONICALLY.) Our allegories, our talking weapons. And is there also . . . ?

CARMEN

As every week, a new theme. (THE CHIEF OF POLICE MAKES A GESTURE OF CURIOSITY AS SHE ACTS OUT HER WORDS WITH AN IMAGINARY BABY.) This time it's the baby who gets slapped, spanked, tucked in, then cries and is cuddled.

THE CHIEF OF POLICE

(IMPATIENTLY.) Fine. But. . . .

CARMEN

(TALKING TO THE IMAGINARY BABY SHE HOLDS IN HER ARMS.) He's charming, Sir. And so sad!

THE CHIEF OF POLICE

(CROSSING DOWN RIGHT TO UP LEFT CENTER AREA X, IRRITABLY.) Is that all?

CARMEN

And so pretty when you diaper him. . . .

THE CHIEF OF POLICE

(WITH RISING FURY, TURNING LEFT TO CARMEN.) Carmen? I'm asking you: am I in it?

CARMEN

Are you in it? (TURNING HER HEAD TO HIM.)

IRMA

(IRONICALLY, THOUGH WE DO NOT KNOW WITH WHOM SHE IS IRONIC.) No, you're not in it.

THE CHIEF OF POLICE

Still not? (TURNING RIGHT, THEN BACK LEFT, TO CARMEN.) Well, yes or no, is there a simulation. . . .

CARMEN

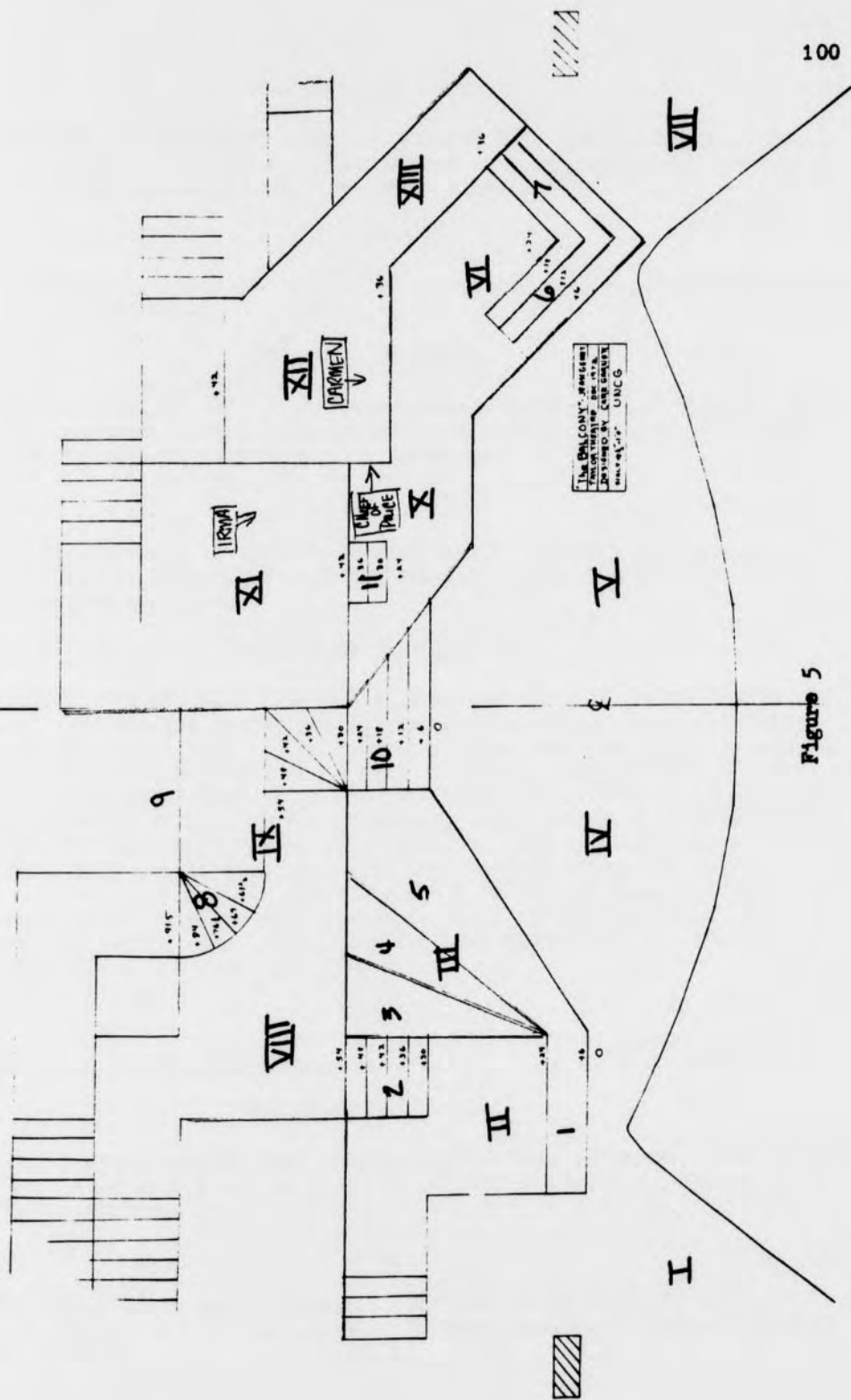
(BEWILDERED.) Simulation?

THE CHIEF OF POLICE

Yes! You idiot! An impersonation of the Chief of Police? (VERY HEAVY SILENCE.) /FIGURE 5./

IRMA

(RISES, CROSSES DOWN LEFT CENTER AREA XI OVER THE CHIEF OF POLICE'S SHOULDER. SHE IS RIGHT OF HIM.) The time's not ripe. My dear, your function isn't noble enough to offer dreamers an image that would console them. Perhaps because it lacks illustrious ancestors? No, my dear fellow. . . . You must resign yourself to the fact that you image is not yet elevated to the liturgies of the brothel. (CARMEN RETURNS TO HER SEAT UP CENTER AREA XII. IRMA CROSSES RIGHT TO THE DESK, FINDING A CHECK LIST OF HER CLIENTS AND PACES TO CENTER AND BACK AS SHE TICKS THEM OFF.) There are two kings of France with coronation ceremonies, a dey of Algiers surrendering, a fireman putting out a fire, a pickpocket, a farmer in his barn . . . but no chief of police . . . nor colonial administrator, though there is a missionary dying on the cross, and (STOPPING FULL FRONT DOWN CENTER AREA XI.) Christ in person.



THE CHIEF OF POLICE

(CROSSING UP TO DOWN RIGHT AREA XII, THEN TO LEFT CENTER AREA XI. IRMA CROSSES TO HER DESK.) So not a single one of your clients has had the idea . . . the remotest idea, the barest suspicion. . . .

IRMA

No. I know you do what you can. You try hatred and love. But glory gives you the cold shoulder.

THE CHIEF OF POLICE

(FORCEFULLY, TURNING LEFT.) My image is growing bigger and bigger. It's becoming colossal. Everything around me repeats and reflects it. And you've never seen it represented in this place?

IRMA

In any case, even if it were celebrated here, I wouldn't see anything. (SITTING, FACING DOWN RIGHT, BUT PEEKING LEFT TO CATCH HIS REACTION.) The ceremonies are secret.

THE CHIEF OF POLICE

(INFURIATED, CROSSES RIGHT TO IRMA'S LEFT, THEN UP LEFT CENTER BEHIND HER.) You liar. You've got secret peep-holes in every wall. Every partition, every mirror, is rigged. In one place, you can hear the sighs, in another the echo of the moans. You don't need me to tell you that brothel tricks are mainly mirror tricks. . . . (STOPS, LOOKS DOWN AT IRMA ABOVE HER RIGHT SHOULDER, SHE GRINS UP AT HIM. HE SPEAKS, SADLY, BUT WITH DETERMINATION, CROSSING LEFT CENTER.) Nobody yet! But I'll make my image detach itself from me. I'll make it penetrate into your studios, force its way in, reflect and multiply itself. (CROSSING RIGHT TO IRMA.) Irma, my function weighs me down. Here, it will appear to me in the blazing light of pleasure and death. (MUSINGLY, CROSSING LEFT CENTER AREA XI, FONDLING HIS CIGAR IN HIS RIGHT HAND.) Of death.

IRMA

You must keep killing, my dear George.

THE CHIEF OF POLICE

I do what I can, I assure you. People fear me more and more. (VERY IRRITATED.) I do what I can to prove to the nation that I'm a leader, a lawgiver, a builder. . . .

IRMA

(STANDS, UNEASILY.) You're raving. (CROSSING TO CENTER.) Or else you really do expect to build an empire. In which case you're raving (CROSSES BACK TO HER DESK.)

THE CHIEF OF POLICE

(WITH CONVICTION, CROSSING TO UP RIGHT AREA XI.) When the rebellion's been put down, and put down by me, when I'm supported by the nation and summoned by the Queen, nothing can stop me. Then, and only then, will you see who I now am! (MUSINGLY, AS IRMA CROSSES UP LEFT CENTER TO THE CHAIR.) Yes, my dear, I want to build an empire . . . so that the empire will, in exchange, build me. . . .

IRMA

. . . a tomb. (SITS.)

THE CHIEF OF POLICE

(SOMEWHAT TAKEN ABACK, BUT REGAINING DETERMINATION, CROSSES UP RIGHT TO LEFT OF THE CHAIR.) But, after all, why not? Doesn't every conqueror have one? (EXALTED.) Alexandria? I'll have my tomb, Irma. And when the cornerstone is laid, you'll be my guest of honour.

IRMA

(THE CHIEF OF POLICE CROSSES DOWN LEFT TO RIGHT AREA XII, TO CATCH CARMEN IN PROFILE TO HIM AS SHE HAS BEGUN TO CROSS TO EXIT UP AREA XII.) Thank you. (TO CARMEN.) Carmen, the tea.

THE CHIEF OF POLICE

Just a minute, Carmen. What do you think of the idea?

CARMEN

That you want to merge your life with one long funeral, sir.

THE CHIEF OF POLICE

(AGGRESSIVELY.) Is life anything else? (CROSSING DOWN RIGHT CENTER AREA XII, HER WORDS PULLING CARMEN ALONG ON HIS LEFT.) You seem to know everything--so tell me: in this sumptuous theatre were every moment a drama is performed--in the sense that the outside world says a mass is celebrated--what have you observed.

CARMEN

(AFTER HESITATION.) As for anything serious, anything worth reporting, only one thing: that without the thighs it contained, a pair of pants on a chair is beautiful, sir. Emptied of our little old men, our ornaments are deathly sad. They're the ones that are placed on the catafalques of high dignitaries. They cover only corpses that never stop dying. And yet. . . .

IRMA

(TO CARMEN.) That's not what the Chief of Police is asking.

THE CHIEF OF POLICE

(OVER HIS RIGHT SHOULDER TO IRMA.) I'm used to Carmen's speeches. (TO CARMEN.) You were saying: and yet. . . ?

CARMEN

(IRMA BEGINS A SLOW CROSS TO THE DESK TO PUSH A BUTTON TO RING.) And yet, I'm sure that the sudden joy in their eyes when they see the cheap finery is really the gleam of innocence. . . .

THE CHIEF OF POLICE

(CROSSING DOWN TO UP LEFT CENTER AREA X, VERY PLEASED.) People claim that our house sends them to death. (SUDDENLY A RINGING. IRMA STARTS. A PAUSE.)

IRMA

(CROSSING TO CENTER AREA XI, FEIGNING ANXIETY.) Someone's opened the door. Who can it be at this hour? (TO CARMEN.) Carmen, go down and shut the door. (CARMEN EXITS UP RIGHT AREA XII.) A RATHER LONG SILENCE BETWEEN IRMA AND THE CHIEF OF POLICE, WHO REMAIN ALONE.)

THE CHIEF OF POLICE

My tomb!

IRMA

(CROSSING DOWN CENTER STEP UNIT 11 TO CENTER AREA X; THE CHIEF OF POLICE IS TO HER LEFT.) It was I who rang. I wanted to be alone with you for a moment. (A PAUSE, DURING WHICH THEY LOOK INTO EACH OTHER'S EYES SERIOUSLY.) Tell me, George. . . . (SHE HESITATES.) Do you still insist on keeping up the game? No, no, don't be impatient. Aren't you tired of it?

THE CHIEF OF POLICE

. . . In a little while I'll be going home.

IRMA

If you can. The rebellion leaves you free to go.

THE CHIEF OF POLICE

The rebellion is a game. (CROSSING UP RIGHT AREA X.) From here you can't

see anything of the outside, but every rebel is playing a game. (PUTTING RIGHT LEG UP ON AREA XI, TURNED UP RIGHT.) And he loves his game.

IRMA

(CROSSING TO RIGHT CENTER, TURNED TO HIM.) But supposing they let themselves be carried beyond the game? I mean if they get so involved in it that they destroy and replace everything. (TURNS, CROSSING DOWN LEFT TO DOWN CENTER AREA X.) Yes, yes, I know, there's always the false detail that reminds them that at a certain moment, at a certain point in the drama, they have to stop, and even withdraw. . . . But what if they're so carried away by passion that they no longer recognize anything and leap, without realizing it, into . . . (TURNING UP RIGHT TO HIM.)

THE CHIEF OF POLICE

(TURNING LEFT, TO IRMA.) Into reality? What of it? Let them try. (CROSSES LEFT TO DOWN RIGHT AREA XII.) I do as they do, I penetrate right into the reality that the game offers us, and since I have the upper hand, it's I who score.

IRMA

They'll be stronger than you.

THE CHIEF OF POLICE

Why do you say that? I have dollars invested--a thousand resources. (CROSSES TO DOWN LEFT CENTER AREA XI, ONE LEVEL ABOVE IRMA.) All right, enough of that. Are you or aren't you the mistress of a house of illusions? Good. If I come to your place, it's to find satisfaction in your mirrors and their trickery. (TENDERLY.) Don't worry. Everything will be just as it's always been.

IRMA

(CROSSING UP STEP UNIT 11 TO DESK, NOT LETTING THE CHIEF OF POLICE BOTHER HER WITH HIS INSULTS. THEY ARE BOTH NOW ABLE, AFTER A BIT OF A GAME, TO EXCHANGE THOUGHTS FOR A MOMENT ON A QUIET LEVEL.) I don't know why, but today I feel uneasy. Carmen seems strange to me. The rebels--how should I put it?--have a kind of gravity. . . .

THE CHIEF OF POLICE

Their role requires it.

IRMA

(TURNS UP LEFT CENTER TO CHAIR; CHIEF OF POLICE COUNTERS TO DOWN LEFT.) No, no . . . of determination. They walk by the windows threateningly, but they don't sing. The threat is in their eyes.

THE CHIEF OF POLICE

What of it? Supposing it is, do you take me for a coward? Do you think I should give up and go home?

IRMA

(PENSIVELY.) No. Besides, (CROSSING BACK TO DESK.) I think it's too late.

THE CHIEF OF POLICE

Do you have any news?

IRMA

From Chantal, before she lit out. The power-house will be occupied around 3 a.m.

THE CHIEF OF POLICE

(THINKING TO HIMSELF, CROSSES UP TO CHAIR AND SITS.) Are you sure? Who told her?

IRMA

The partisans of the Fourth Sector.

THE CHIEF OF POLICE

That's plausible. How did she find out?

IRMA

It's through her that there were leaks, and through her alone. (CROSSES CENTER, TO HIM.) So don't belittle my house. . . .

THE CHIEF OF POLICE

Your cat-house, my love.

IRMA

Cat-house, whore-house, bawdy-house. Brothel. Fuckery. Call it anything you like. So Chantal's the only one who's on the other side . . . She lit out. (CROSSES BACK TO DESK, SITS IN CHAIR FACING FRONT.) But before she did, she confided in Carmen and Carmen's no fool.

THE CHIEF OF POLICE

Who tipped her off?

IRMA

Roger. The plumber. Chantal spoke to him. I put him out: too late. He belongs to the Andromeda network.

THE CHIEF OF POLICE

Andromeda? Splendid. The rebellion's riding high, it's moving out of this world. If it gives its sectors the names of constellations, it'll evaporate in no time and be metamorphosed into song. Let's hope the songs are beautiful.

IRMA

(RISES, CROSSES TO ABOVE CENTER, TO CHIEF OF POLICE.) And what if their songs give the rebels courage? What if they're willing to die for them?

THE CHIEF OF POLICE

The beauty of their songs will make them soft. (CROSSING DOWN LEFT AREA XI.) Unfortunately, they haven't yet reached the point of either beauty or softness. (STOPS DOWN LEFT AREA XI; IRMA IS CROSSING SLOWLY TO HIM.) In any case, Chantal's tender passions were providential. . . . (TURNING RIGHT, FACE TO FACE WITH IRMA.) And, as usual, you're going to bring up our grand passion.

IRMA

GENTLY, FEIGNING SINCERITY.) No, not our passion, but the time when we loved each other.

THE CHIEF OF POLICE

Well, would you like to give a historical account of it and deliver a eulogy? You think my visits would have less zest if you didn't flavour them with the memory of a pretended innocence?

IRMA

It's a question of tenderness. Neither the wildest concoctions of my clients nor my own fancies nor my constant endeavour to enrich my studios with new themes nor the passing of time nor the gilding and crystals nor the bitter cold can dispel the moments when you nestled in my arms or keep me from remembering them.

THE CHIEF OF POLICE

(PULLING HER INTO HIM, BOTH FACING FRONT.) Do you really miss them?

IRMA

(TENDERLY.) I'd give my kingdom to relive a single one of them! And you know which one. I need just one word of truth--as when one looks at one's wrinkles at night, or rinses one's mouth. . . .

THE CHIEF OF POLICE

It's too late. (A PAUSE, AS HE LETS GO OF HER AND CROSSES LEFT TO LEFT CENTER AREA XII.) Besides, we couldn't cuddle each other eternally. And after all, you don't know what I was already secretly moving towards when I was in your arms.

IRMA

I know that I loved you.

THE CHIEF OF POLICE

It's too late. Could you give up Arthur?

IRMA

(CROSSES FORCEFULLY TO HIM, PASSES HIM, CROSSING TO RIGHT CENTER AREA XIII. THE CHIEF OF POLICE STEPS TO RIGHT CENTER AREA XII.) It was you who forced him on me. You insisted on there being a man here--against my better judgment--in a domain that should have remained virgin. . . . You, fool, don't laugh. Virgin, that is, sterile. (CROSSING TO RIGHT AREA XIII.) But you wanted a pillar, a shaft, a phallus present--an upright bulk. Well, it's here. You saddled me with that hunk of congested meat, that milksop with wrestler's arms. (CROSSING ONE STEP RIGHT, DIRECTLY THREATENING THE CHIEF OF POLICE.) He may look like a strong-man at a fair, but you don't realize how fragile he is. You stupidly forced him on me because you felt yourself ageing.

THE CHIEF OF POLICE

Be still.

IRMA

(SHRUGGING HER SHOULDERS.) And you relaxed here through Arthur. I need him now. I have no illusions. I'm his man and he relies on me, but I need that rugged shop-window dummy hanging on to my skirts. He's my body, as it were, but set beside me.

THE CHIEF OF POLICE

(IRONICALLY.) What if I were jealous?

IRMA

Of that big doll made up as an executioner in order to satisfy a phony judge? You're kidding, (CROSSING RIGHT CENTER TO HIM.) but the spectacle of me under the spectacle of that magnificent body never used to bother you. . . . Let me repeat. . . .

THE CHIEF OF POLICE

(HE SLAPS IRMA WITH HIS RIGHT HAND. THE FORCE THROWS HER ON THE SOFA-BED CENTER. HE CROSSES LEFT AREA XII, LEFT OF HER AND GRABS HER LEFT ARM WITH HIS RIGHT, SITTING HER UP STRAIGHT.) And don't blubber or I'll break your jaw, and I'll send your joint up in smoke. I'll set fire to your (MOTIONING TO EACH AREA OF HER BODY WITH HIS LEFT HAND.) hair and bush and I'll turn you loose. I'll light up the town with blazing whores. (VERY GENTLY, PULLING HER CLOSER.) Do you think I'm capable of it?

IRMA

(IN A PANTING WHISPER.) Yes, darling.

THE CHIEF OF POLICE

(HE PULLS HER UP; THEY CROSS RIGHT ONTO AREA XI. IRMA SITS AT THE DESK, HE TO CENTER AREA XI.) All right, add up the accounts for me. If you like, you can deduct Apollo's crêpe de Chine. And hurry up. I've got to get back to my post. For the time being, I have to act. Afterwards. . . . Afterwards, things'll run themselves. My name will act in my place. Well, what about Arthur?

IRMA

(SUBMISSIVELY.) He'll be dead this evening.

THE CHIEF OF POLICE

Dead? You mean . . . really . . . really dead?

IRMA

(WITH RESIGNATION.) Come, come, George, the way one dies here.

THE CHIEF OF POLICE

Indeed? Meaning. . . .

IRMA

The Minister. . . . (SHE IS INTERRUPTED BY THE VOICE OF CARMEN.)

CARMEN

(IN THE WINGS.) Lock Studio 17! Elyane, hurry up! And lower the studio . . . no, no, wait. . . . (WE HEAR THE SOUND OF A RUSTY COG-WHEEL, THE KIND MADE BY CERTAIN OLD LIFTS. ENTER CARMEN UP RIGHT AREA XII, CROSSES TO RIGHT AREA XII.) Madame, the Queen's Envoy is in the drawingroom. . . . (ARTHUR APPEARS, TREMBLING AND WITH HIS CLOTHES TORN, ENTERING UP CENTER AREA XIII, RUNNING AND STUMBLING TO RIGHT CENTER AREA XI.)

ARTHUR

(NOTICING THE CHIEF OF POLICE.) You here! You managed to get through?

IRMA

(RUSHING TO HIS ARMS. CARMEN COUNTERS TO LEFT CENTER AREA XII.) Darling! What's the matter? Are you hurt? Speak! (STEPPING TO HIS LEFT.)

ARTHUR

(PANTING.) I tried to get to Police Headquarters. Impossible. The whole city's lit up with fires. The rebels are in control practically everywhere. I don't think you can get back, sir. I was able to reach the Royal Palace, and saw His Excellency. He said he'd try to come. I might add that he shook my hand. And then I left. The women are the most excited. They're urging the men to loot and kill. But what was most awful was a girl who was singing. . . . (A SHOT IS HEARD. A WINDOW-PANE IS SHIVERED. ARTHUR FALLS DOWN DOWN RIGHT CENTER AREA XII, DANGLING ONTO UP RIGHT AREA VI, HIT IN THE FOREHEAD BY A BULLET COMING FROM OUTSIDE. CARMEN CROSSES RIGHT CENTER, STOOPS IN A POSE OF THE PIETA.) FIGURE 6.

THE CHIEF OF POLICE

In short, I'm stuck in the whore-house. That means I'll have to act from the whore-house.

IRMA

(TO HERSELF, TURNING DOWN LEFT.) Can it be that everything's slipping away? Slipping between my fingers? . . . (BITTERLY, CLUTCHING HER THROAT.) I still have my jewels . . .

CARMEN

(RISING, SOFTLY.) If the house is to be blown up. . . . Is Saint Theresa's costume in the closet, Mme. Irma?

IRMA

(ANXIOUSLY.) At the left. But first have Arthur removed. I'm going to receive the Envoy. (THE LIGHTS FADE QUICKLY WITH CARMEN TURNED TO EXIT UP LEFT AREA XII, IRMA EXITING TO UP CENTER AREA XIII, THE CHIEF OF POLICE PUFFING ON HIS CIGAR CENTER AREA XI, AND ARTHUR'S BODY CRUMPLED DOWN RIGHT CENTER AREA XII.)

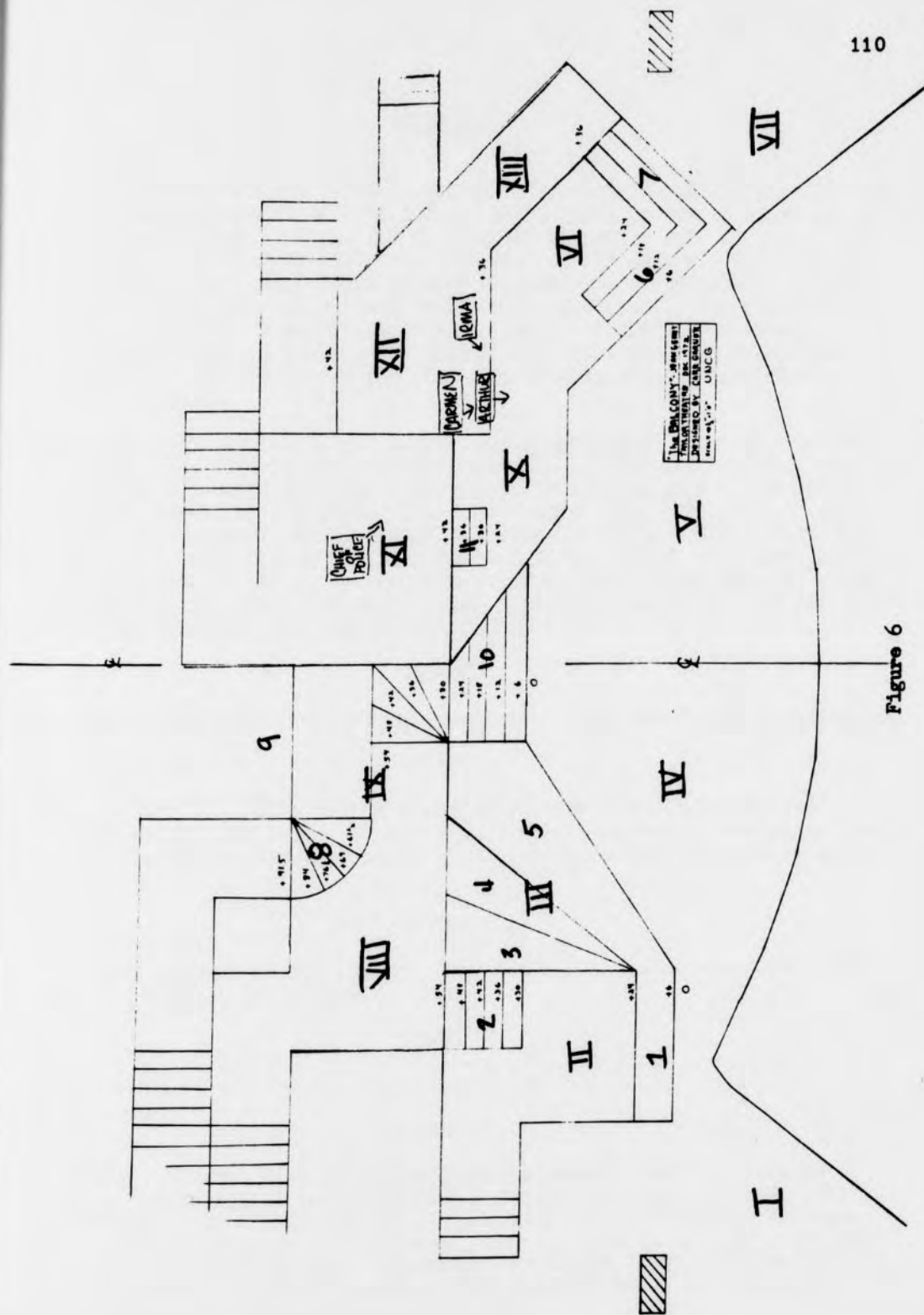


Figure 6

SCENE SIX

(SOUNDS OF GUN FIRE AND BOMBS, A STROBE LIGHT FADES QUICKLY UP FLOODING THE ENTIRE BARE STAGE WITH ERRATIC LIGHT. SMOKE BOMBS GO OFF UP RIGHT AND UP LEFT. FOUR MEN AND A WOMAN RUN UP A LADDER FOOTED IN THE ORCHESTRA PIT AND LEANING ON FRONT OF THE STAGE DOWN LEFT CENTER AREA V. THREE OF THE MEN, A, B, AND C, ARE DRESSED IN GRAY OVERALLS AND CARRY RIFLES. THEY HAVE STOCKINGS OVER THEIR HEADS TO DISTORT THEIR FACES. THE OTHER MAN, ROGER, IS DRESSED IN RAGGED JEANS AND A LEATHER JACKET. THE WOMAN, CHANTAL, HAS ON A BARE BLOOD-RED MIDRIFF TOP AND A SKIRT OF STREAMING MUTED MULTICOLOR RAGS. HER BARE FEET AND WILD BLACK HAIR LEND TO HER GYPSY APPEARANCE.

WHEN THE THREE MEN RUN UP THE LADDER, MAN A CROSSES UP RIGHT TO STEP UNIT 3 IN AREA III, THEN UP LEFT TO DOWN LEFT AREA IX, CROUCHED ON STEP UNIT 10, AIMING HIS RIFLE UP RIGHT. MAN B RUNS UP LEFT TO AREA VI, CROSSING RIGHT ON AREA X, UP STEP UNIT 11 TO RIGHT CENTER AREA XIII, FACING ONE-QUARTER CENTER FRONT, ON HIS KNEES, POINTING HIS RIFLE. MAN C, "THE MAN" RUNS LEFT UP STEP UNIT 6 TO RIGHT CENTER AREA VI, FACING DOWN LEFT, POINTING HIS RIFLE OUT LEFT. CHANTAL RUNS RIGHT TO LEFT CENTER AREA IV, ROGER IS LEFT AREA IV. THEY BOTH FACE RIGHT, THEN ROGER GRABS HER LEFT ARM WITH HIS RIGHT HAND AND PULLS HER TO HIM, FACING HIM.)

CHANTAL

Keep me, if you will, my love, but keep me in your heart. And wait for me.

ROGER

(DROPPING TO HIS KNEES, CLUTCHING HER AROUND HER HIPS, FACE OUT, YET PRESSED AGAINST HER BODY.) I love you, Chantal, yourbody, your hair, your bosom, your belly, your guts, your fluids, your smells. Chantal, I love you. They. . . .

CHANTAL

(SMILING, DROPPING TO HER KNEES.) They don't give a damn about me. But without them, I'd be nothing.

ROGER

You're mine. I . . .

CHANTAL

(ANNOYED.) I know. You dragged me from the grave. And no sooner do I shake off my wrappings than, ungrateful wretch that I am, (RUNNING LEFT UP STEP UNIT 6 TO CENTER AREA VI.) I gad about like a trollop. I plunge into the adventure, and I escape you. Yes, to sing, to sing for justice, for the fighters of justice. (SUDDENLY WITH TENDER IRONY, TURNING DOWN RIGHT TO ROGER. HE STANDS, TURNS UP LEFT TOWARDS HER.) But Roger, my love, you know I love you, you and only you.

ROGER

(RUNNING UP LEFT UP STEP UNIT VI TO HER, DOWN LEFT OF HER.) You've just said the words: you're escaping me. I can't follow you in your heroic and stupid course.

CHANTAL

(CROSSING RIGHT TO LEFT AREA X, SOARING.) Ah ha! You're jealous of whom, or what? People say that I soar above the insurrection, that I'm its soul and voice, and you-- (TURNING TO HIM, MOTIONING HIM INTO THE GROUND WITH HER RIGHT ARM.) you're rooted to the ground. That's why you're sad.

ROGER

(CROSSING TO HER, LEFT AREA VI.) Chantal, please, don't be vulgar. If you can help. . . . (ONE OF THE MEN DRAWS NEAR, CROSSING TO RIGHT CENTER AREA VI.)

THE MAN

(TO ROGER.) Well, is it yes or is it no?

ROGER

What if she stays there?

THE MAN

I'm asking you to let us have her for two hours.

ROGER

Chantal belongs. . . .

CHANTAL

(CROSSING ONE STEP RIGHT, RIGHT ARM OUTSTRETCHED UPWARD.) To nobody!

ROGER

. . . To my section.

THE MAN

To the insurrection!

ROGER

If you want a woman to lead your men forward, then create one.

THE MAN

We looked for one, but there aren't any. We tried to build one up: nice voice, nice bosom, with the right kind of free and easy manner. But her eyes lacked fire, and you know that without fire. . . . We asked the North Section and the Port Section to let us have theirs; they weren't free.

CHANTAL

(CROSSING UP STEP UNIT 11 AND RIGHT TO DOWN RIGHT AREA XI.) A woman like me? Another one? All I have is a hoarse voice and a face like an inspired owl's. I give them or lend them for hatred's sake. I'm nothing, only my face, my voice, and inside me a sweet, deadly kindness. D'you mean to tell me I have two popular rivals, two other poor devils? Let them come, (CROSSING LEFT TO DOWN LEFT AREA XI.) I'll show them! I have no rival! (CROSSING DOWN OFF AREA XI TO LEFT CENTER AREA X.)

ROGER

(EXPLODING, CROSSING TWO STEPS LEFT TO RIGHT CENTER AREA VI, TO THE MAN.) I snatched her--snatched her from a grave. She's already escaping me and mounting the sky. If I lend her to you. . . .

THE MAN

(CROSSING DOWN LEFT TO DOWN LEFT CENTER VI.) We're not asking you for that. If we take her, we're hiring her.

CHANTAL

(AMUSED, TAKING ONE STEP RIGHT.) How much?

ROGER

Even if we let you have her to sing and spur on your district, if she gets bumped off we'll lose everything. She's irreplaceable!

THE MAN

She agreed to it.

ROGER

(CROSSING RIGHT TO RIGHT AREA VI, TO CHANTAL.) She doesn't belong to herself any more. She's ours. (RAISING HER LEFT ARM OUTSTRETCHED OVER HER HEAD WITH HIS LEFT HAND. CHANTAL IS BEING USED AS A SIGN HERE AND SHE GLOATS IN IT, RETAINING THE SAME STOIC, YET ANXIOUS AND EXCITED, APPEARANCE AS SHE STARES INTO THE DISTANCE.) She's our sign. All that your women are good for is tearing up and carrying stones or reloading guns. (CROSSING TO CENTER AREA VI TO THE MAN.) I know that's useful, but . . .

THE MAN

How many women do you want in exchange?

ROGER

(THOUGHTFULLY.) Is a singer on the barricades as precious as all that?

THE MAN

How many? Ten women for Chantal? (A PAUSE.) Twenty?

ROGER

Twenty women? You'd pay me twenty measly women, twenty oxen, twenty head of cattle? So Chantal's something special? (CROSSING RIGHT TO RIGHT AREA VI, TO CHANTAL.) And do you know where she comes from?

CHANTAL

(TO ROGER, VIOLENTLY, BUT CROSSING AWAY FROM HIM UP STEP UNIT 11 TO DOWN CENTER AREA VI.) Every morning I go back--because at night I'm ablaze--I go back to a hovel and sleep--chastely, my love!--and drink myself into a stupor on red wine. (CROSSING RIGHT TO DOWN RIGHT XI, PLAYING WITH THE HAIR OF MAN A WHO IS CROUCHED ON STEP UNIT 10, DOWN LEFT AREA IX.) And I, with my grating voice, my sham anger, my cameo eyes, my painted illumination, my Andalusian hair, I comfort and enchant the rabble. They'll win and my victory will be a strange one.

ROGER

(THOUGHTFULLY.) Twenty women for Chantal?

THE MAN

(SHARPLY.) A hundred.

ROGER

(STILL PENSIVELY.) And it's probably because of her that we'll win. She already embodies the Revolution. . . .

THE MAN

A hundred. You agree?

ROGER

Where are you taking her? And what'll she have to do?

CHANTAL

We'll see. Don't worry, I was born under a lucky star. As for the rest of it, (LEAPING DOWN RIGHT, DOWN STEP UNIT 10 TO RIGHT CENTER AREA IV, LOOKING OFF, ENVISIONING HER PEOPLE RIGHT.) I realize my power. (MAN B RUNS FROM UP LEFT XI TO DOWN LEFT AREA XII, FACING AND AIMING HIS RIFLE DOWN LEFT.) The people love me, they listen to me, they follow me.

ROGER

What will she do?

THE MAN

Hardly anything. We're attacking the Palace at dawn. Chantal will go in first. She'll sing from a balcony. That's all.

ROGER

A hundred women. A thousand and maybe more. (CROSSING RIGHT TO DOWN RIGHT AREA X, LOOKING DOWN ON CHANTAL.) So she's no longer a woman. She's a creature they make out of rage and despair to fight against an image. A creature. No, she's frozen into an image. The fight is no longer taking place in reality, but in the lists. Field azure. It's the combat of allegories. We no longer know ourselves why we revolted. (CROSSING LEFT TO RIGHT AREA VI.) So she had to come to this. FIGURE 7.

THE MAN

Well, is it yes? Answer, Chantal. It's for you to answer.

CHANTAL

(TO THE MAN.) I'd like us to be alone for a moment. (THE MAN CROSSES LEFT TO DOWN CENTER AREA XIII. CHANTAL RUNS UP LEFT, UP AREA X TO DOWN CENTER AREA XI. ROGER RUNS UP RIGHT UP AREA XII TO DOWN LEFT CENTER AREA XI.)

ROGER

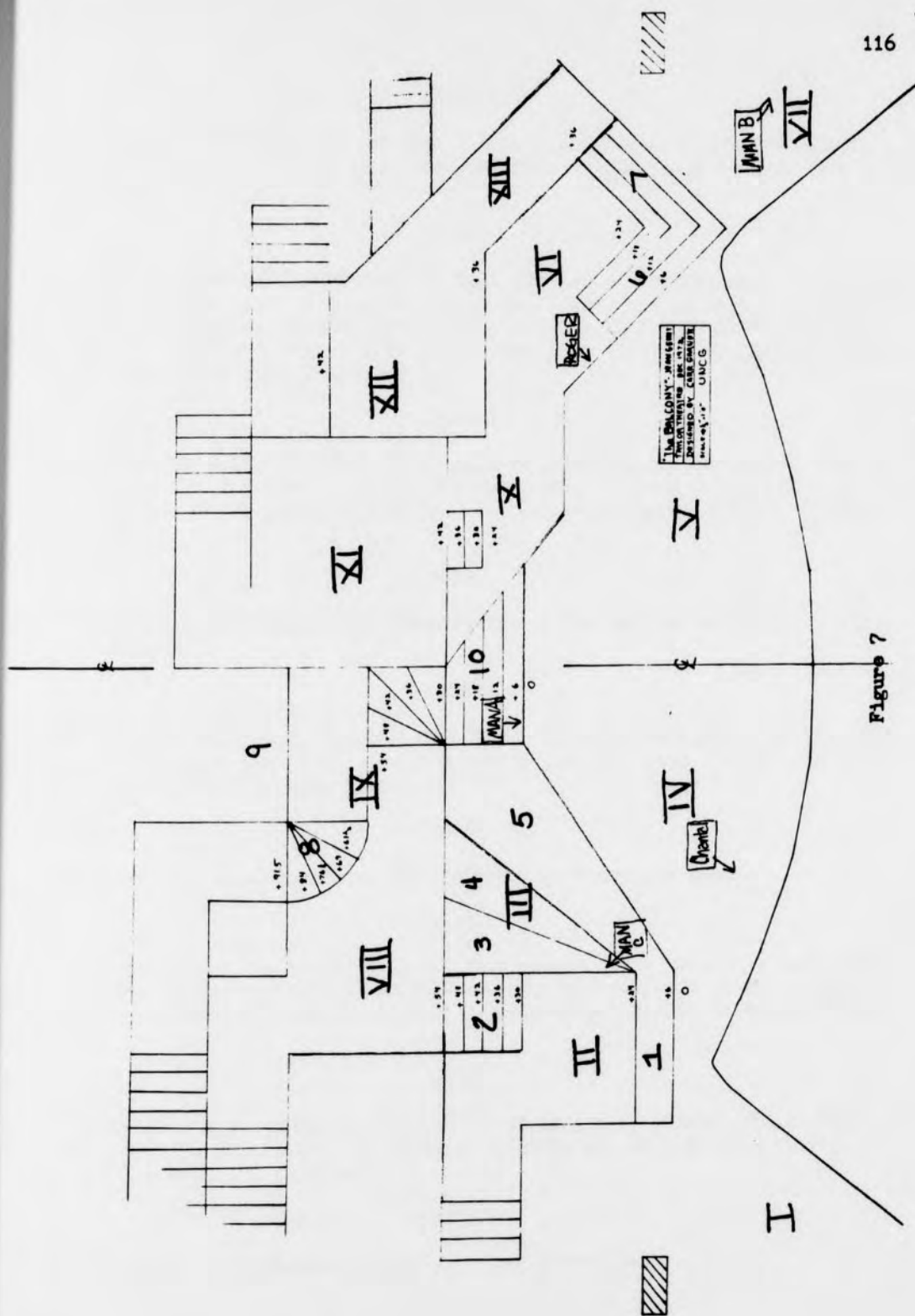
(VIOLENTLY.) I didn't steal you from the brothel for you to become a unicorn or a two-headed eagle.

CHANTAL

(CROSSING TO DOWN RIGHT CENTER AREA XI, PETULANTLY.) You don't like unicorns.

ROGER

(FOLLOWING BEHIND HER TO HER LEFT.) I've never been able to make love to them. (HE CARESSES HER.) Nor to you either.



CHANTAL

You mean I don't know how to love. I disappoint you. (TURNING AROUND, FACING HIM.) Yet I love you. And you rent me out for a hundred female diggers.

ROGER

(THEY WALK DOWN TO CENTER AREA X, HAND IN HAND.) Forgive me. I need them. And yet I love you. I love you and I don't know how to tell you. I can't sing. And singing is the last resort. (MAN A RUNS DOWN RIGHT FROM STEP UNIT 10, DOWN LEFT AREA IX, TO DOWN RIGHT AREA III ON STEP UNIT 5. CARMEN AND ROGER SENSE THIS URGENCY.)

CHANTAL

(CROSSING TO ROGER'S LEFT.) I'll have to leave before day-break. If the North Section has come through, the Queen will be dead in an hour. It'll be the end of the Chief of Police. If not, we'll never get out of this bedlam.

ROGER

(PUTTING HIS ARMS AROUND HER FROM BEHIND.) The minutes without you will be unbearable.

CHANTAL

We won't be separated, I swear to you. I'll speak to them in an icy tone and at the same time I'll murmur words of love for you. You'll hear them from here, and I'll hear yours.

ROGER

They may keep you, Chantal. They're strong--strong as death.

CHANTAL

Don't be afraid, my love. I know their power. Your sweetness and tenderness are stronger. I'll speak to them with severity. I'll tell them what the people demand. They'll listen to me because they'll be afraid. Let me go.

ROGER

(SCREAMING. MAN B RUNS UP RIGHT TO RIGHT AREA XI. CHANTAL PULLS AWAY FROM ROGER TO HIS RIGHT. HE IS STILL HOLDING HER AS SHE TRIES TO PULL AWAY.) Chantal, I love you!

CHANTAL

Ah, my love, it's because I love you that I must hurry.

ROGER

You love me?

CHANTAL

You envelop me and I contain you. When I stand before them, when I speak to them, I'll be hearing your sighs and moans and the beating of your heart. Let me go.

ONE OF THE REBELS

(MAN A RUNS UP LEFT, TO DOWN LEFT AREA IX ON STEP UNIT 10, STANDING, HE TURNS TO CHANTAL, EXPRESSING URGENCY. ROGER KEEPS A HOLD OF HER.) It's time, Chantal. Day is breaking.

CHANTAL

(CROSSING UP LEFT, UP ON STEP UNIT 10.) They're calling me.

ROGER

(SUDDENLY IRRITATED, STOPPING HER WITH HIS WORDS.) You'll never be able to speak to them.

CHANTAL

(CROSSING UP STAIRS TO DOWN CENTER AREA XI.) I, better than anyone. I'm gifted.

ROGER

(CROSSING TWO STEPS RIGHT.) They're clever, cunning. . . .

CHANTAL

I'll invent gestures, postures, phrases. Before they even say a word, I'll understand, and you'll be proud of my victory.

ROGER

(CROSSING UP STEPS TO HER, ON HER LEFT.) Let the others go. (HE CRIES OUT TO THE REBELS, DIRECTLY TO MAN A ON STEP UNIT 10, AS HE CROSSES RIGHT IN FRONT OF CHANTAL.) You go! Or me, if you're afraid. I'll tell them they must give in, because we're the law.

CHANTAL

Don't listen to him. (TO ROGER, PULLING HIM AROUND IN FRONT OF HER, AWAY FROM THE REBEL. HE IS ON HER LEFT.) All they can do is fight, and all you can do is love me. That's the role you've learned to play. But for me, it's something else. (A PAUSE. CHANTAL CROSSES LEFT TO LEFT CENTER

AREA XII; HER EYES NOW SHOW THAT SHE'S HURTING ROGER TO HELP HIM LET HER GO.) At least the brothel has been of some use to me: it's taught me the art of pretence, of acting. I've had to play so many roles that I know almost all of them. And I've had so many partners. . . .

ROGER

(CROSSING LEFT QUICKLY, TO HER RIGHT, WITH HURT AND DISBELIEF.) Chantal!

CHANTAL

And such artful ones, such cunning and eloquent ones, that my skill and trickery and eloquence are incomparable.

ROGER

You know all the roles, don't you? Just now, you were reciting lines to me, weren't you?

CHANTAL

(TURNING RIGHT TO HIM.) One learns fast. You yourself. . . .

ONE OF THE REBELS

(MAN B, CROSSES TO LEFT AREA XI.) Cut the speeches. Get going.

ROGER

(MAN A RUNS RIGHT FROM STEP UNIT 10, MAN BE FROM RIGHT AREA XI, MAN C FROM AREA XIII RIGHT ACROSS VI, X, UP TO XI, ALL EXIT UP RIGHT VIII. CHANTAL LOOKS AT ROGER AND BEGINS TO RUN RIGHT TO EXIT WITH THE REBELS. SHE RUNS SIDE WAYS, AS IF TORN, BEGGING WITH ROGER AS SHE RUNS AWAY FROM HIM. THE GLORIA OF "THE MASS FOR THE BALCONY" FADES UP AND CONTINUES THROUGH THE BLACKOUT INTO SCENE SEVEN.) Chantal, stay!

CHANTAL

I envelop you and I contain you, my love. You're the first, the only one, the only one there'll ever be. . . . (THE REBELS AND CHANTAL DISAPPEAR.)

ROGER

(ALONE, TURNING FRONT, TO HIMSELF IN DISBELIEF. HE CROSSES DOWN TO AREA VI AND EXITS OFF CENTER AREA XIII AS HE SPEAKS.) Yes, she had to give them an answer. The one they wanted. In a little while she'll have others. She'll be the answer they're waiting for. (THE LIGHTS FADE QUICKLY TO A BLACKOUT.)

SCENE SEVEN

(AN EXPLOSION, SMOKE, AND FLASHES OF LIGHT. THE LIGHTS FADE UP QUICKLY ON AREAS III AND IV REVEALING THE FUNERAL STUDIO IN MME. IRMA'S LISTING OF STUDIOS. IN RUINS, GREENISH LIGHT BATHES THE STUDIO WHICH SEEMS TO FLOW INTO ENDLESS SHADOWS. A RAGGED SURREAL FUNERAL ARRANGEMENT IS PLACED DOWN RIGHT AREA IX. THERE IS A DARK RED LEATHER CHAIR PLACED RIGHT CENTER AREA IV ANGLED TOWARD CENTER STAGE. PARALLEL TO THE AUDIENCE, PLACED UP RIGHT CENTER TO UP CENTER IV IS A FAKE MARBLE FUNERAL COFFIN. ARTHUR'S CORPSE IS LYING ON THIS COFFIN, PROSTRATE, HIS HEAD AT UP CENTER AREA IV, ARMS FOLDED OVER CHEST. LINED UP HORIZONTALLY BEHIND THE COFFIN ARE MME. IRMA UP RIGHT CENTER IV AND THE CHIEF OF POLICE UP CENTER IV, BOTH LOOKING DOWN ON THE CORPSE, HANDS FOLDED IN FRONT. LEFT CENTER AREA IV IS A NEW FIGURE, THE COURT ENVOY. DRESSED IN "EMBASSY" UNIFORM OF WHITE PANTS AND RED CUTAWAY, HE REMAINS UNSCATHED BY THE EXPLOSION AS HE SPEAKS.)

THE ENVOY

I rather think it was the Royal Palace. (THE CHARACTERS ALL LOOK AT EACH OTHER, HORROR-STRICKEN. AS HE CROSSES UP BEHIND THE CHIEF OF POLICE, PLACING HIMSELF IN LINE BETWEEN IRMA AND THE CHIEF OF POLICE.) Let us not be alarmed. So long as we are not like that. . . . (HE POINTS TO THE CORPSE OF ARTHUR.) FIGURE 8.

IRMA

He didn't think he'd be acting his role of corpse so well this evening.

THE ENVOY

(SMILING.) Our dear Minister of the Interior would have been delighted had he not himself met the same fate. It is unfortunately I who have had to replace him in his mission here, and I have no taste for pleasures of this kind. (HE TOUCHES ARTHUR'S CORPSE WITH HIS FOOT.) Yes, this body would have sent our dear Minister into raptures.

IRMA

(CROSSING DOWN RIGHT TO RIGHT CENTER AREA IV.) Not at all, your Excellency. It's make-believe that these gentlemen want. The Minister desired a fake corpse. This one is real. Look at it: it's truer than life. His entire being is speeding towards immobility.

THE ENVOY

(STEPPING UP TO UNIT 5 OF AREA III.) He was therefore meant for grandeur.

THE CHIEF OF POLICE

Him? (CROSSING DOWN RIGHT TO THE LEFT OF THE CHAIR.) He was a spineless dummy.



Figure 8

THE ENVOY

He was, like us, haunted by a quest of immobility. By what we call the hieratic. (CROSSING DOWN RIGHT TO UP LEFT OF CHIEF OF POLICE.) And, in passing, allow me to pay tribute to the imagination which conceived for this house a funeral parlour.

IRMA

(PROUDLY.) And you see only part of it.

THE ENVOY

Whose idea was it?

IRMA

The Wisdom of Nations, your Excellency.

THE ENVOY

It does things well. (CROSSING LEFT TO CENTER AREA IV.) But we were talking about the Queen, to protect whom is my mission.

THE CHIEF OF POLICE

You're going about it in a curious way. (CROSSING UP, TO UP RIGHT CENTER AREA IV, RIGHT OF THE CORPSE.) The Palace, according to what you say, is. . . .

THE ENVOY

(SMILING.) For the time being, Her Majesty is in safety. But time is pressing. The prelate is said to have been beheaded. The Archbishop's Palace has been ransacked. The Law Court and Military Headquarters have been routed. . . .

THE CHIEF OF POLICE

But what about the Queen?

THE ENVOY

(IN A VERY LIGHT TONE.) She's embroidering. For a moment she thought of nursing the wounded. But it was pointed out to her that, as the throne was threatened, she had to carry to an extreme the Royal prerogatives.

IRMA

(CROSSING LEFT TWO STEPS.) Which are?

THE ENVOY

Absence. (CROSSING LEFT TWO STEPS.) Her Majesty has retired to a chamber, in solitude. The disobedience of her people saddens her. She is embroidering a handkerchief. (THE CHIEF OF POLICE CROSSES DOWN TO THE CHAIR AND SITS. IRMA HAS CROSSED TO UP RIGHT CENTER AREA IV, RIGHT OF THE CORPSE.) The design of it is as follows: the four corners will be adorned with poppy heads. In the middle of the handkerchief, embroidered in pale blue silk, will be a swan, resting on the water of a lake. That's the only point about which Her Majesty is troubled: will it be the water of a lake, a pond or a pool? (CROSSING TAUNTINGLY RIGHT, THEN LEFT, BACK TO LEFT CENTER AREA IV.) Or simply of a tank or a cup? It is a grave problem. We have chosen it because it is insoluble, and the Queen can engross herself in an infinite meditation. Her Majesty is occupying herself in becoming entirely what she must be: the Queen. (HE LOOKS AT THE CORPSE.) She, too, is moving rapidly towards immobility.

IRMA

And she's embroidering.

THE ENVOY

No, Madame, I say the Queen is embroidering a handkerchief, for though it is my duty to describe her, it is also my duty to conceal her.

IRMA

Do you mean she's not embroidering?

THE ENVOY

I mean that the Queen is embroidering and that she is not embroidering. She picks her nose, examines the pickings and lies down again. Then she dries the dishes.

THE CHIEF OF POLICE

(JUMPING OUT OF THE CHAIR.) By God! What have you done with Her Majesty? I want a straight answer. I'm not amused. . . .

THE ENVOY

She is in a chest. She is sleeping. Wrapped in the folds of Royalty, she is snoring. . . .

THE CHIEF OF POLICE

(THREATENINGLY.) Is the Queen dead?

THE ENVOY

(UNPERTURBED.) She is snoring and she is not snoring. Her head, which is tiny, supports, without wavering, a crown of metal and stones.

THE CHIEF OF POLICE

(MORE AND MORE THREATENINGLY, CROSSING LEFT TO RIGHT OF THE ENVOY.) Enough of that. You said the Palace was in danger. . . . What's to be done? I still have almost the entire police force behind me. Those who are still with me are ready to die for me. . . . They know who I am and what I'll do for them. . . . I, too, have my role to play. But if the Queen is dead, everything is jeopardized. How far has the rebellion gone? I want a clear answer.

THE ENVOY

You can judge from the state of this house. And from your own. . . . All seems lost. (THE CHIEF OF POLICE, FRUSTRATED, TURNS AND CROSSES TWO STEPS UP RIGHT AREA IV AND PUFFS ON HIS CIGAR. IRMA CROSSES LEFT TO RIGHT OF THE ENVOY.)

IRMA

You belong to the Court, your Excellency. Before coming here, I was in the streets. That's where I won my first spurs. I can assure you that I've known worse situations. My house stands its ground. My rooms aren't intact, but they've held up. My whores, except for one lunatic, are on the job. (CROSSES DOWN RIGHT THREE STEPS TO RIGHT CENTER AREA IV.) If the centre of the Palace is a woman like me. . . .

THE ENVOY

(IMPETURBALLY.) The Queen is standing on one foot in the middle of an empty room, and she. . . .

THE CHIEF OF POLICE

(TURNING OUT, FACING FRONT.) That'll do! I've had enough of your riddles. For me, the Queen has to be someone. And the situation has to be concrete. Describe it to me exactly. I've no time to waste. (CARMEN HAS ENTERED FROM OFF RIGHT AREA II, CROSSED DOWN AREA III TO DOWN CENTER III AND IS ATTEMPTING TO WHISPER WITH MME. IRMA.)

THE ENVOY

Whom do you want to save?

THE CHIEF OF POLICE

The Queen!

CARMEN

The flag!

IRMA

My hide! (A PAUSE.)

THE ENVOY

(TO THE CHIEF OF POLICE, CROSSING RIGHT TO IRMA, FOCUSING ON HER AS IF SHE WERE THE QUEEN.) If you're eager to save the Queen--and, beyond her, our flag, and its gold fringe, and its eagle, cords and pole, would you describe them to me? (IRMA NERVOUSLY CROSSES DOWN RIGHT AND SITS IN THE CHAIR.)

THE CHIEF OF POLICE

(CROSSING LEFT TO CENTER AREA IV.) Until now I've served the things you mention, and served them with distinction, and without bothering to know any more about them than what I saw. And I'll continue. (TURNING RIGHT TO THE ENVOY.) What's happening about the rebellion?

THE ENVOY

(RESIGNEDLY.) The garden gates will, for a moment longer, hold back the crowd. (CROSSING LEFT.) The guards are devoted, like us, with an obscure devotion. They'll die for their sovereign. They'll give their blood. Unhappily there won't be enough of it to drown the rebellion. Sand bags have been piled up in front of the doors. In order to confuse even reason. (HE DARTS AROUND CENTER AND DOWN LEFT CENTER IV TO EMPHASIZE EACH AREA HE MENTIONS.) Her Majesty removes herself from one secret chamber to another, from the servants' hall to the Throne Room, from the latrines to the chicken-coop, the chapel, the guard-room. . . . She makes herself unfindable and thus attains a threatened invisibility. So much for the inside of the Palace. (CROSSING UP FROM DOWN LEFT CENTER AREA IV TO STEP UNIT 11, UP LEFT CENTER AREA IV.) Outside the revolution has attained vast proportions. The populace is intoxicated with victory. They're indulging in sacrifices. (CROSSING DOWN TO LEFT CENTER AREA IV, LEFT OF THE CHIEF OF POLICE.)

THE CHIEF OF POLICE

What about the Generalissimo?

THE ENVOY

Gone mad. He wanders among the crowd, where nobody will harm him; he's protected by his madness.

THE CHIEF OF POLICE

The Attorney-General?

THE ENVOY

Died of fright.

THE CHIEF OF POLICE

The Bishop?

THE ENVOY

(CROSSING DOWN LEFT CENTER AREA IV.) His case is more difficult. The Church is secretive. Nothing is known about him. Nothing definite. His decapitated head was said to have been seen on the handlebars of a bicycle. Of course, the rumour was false. We're therefore relying entirely on you. But your orders aren't getting through.

THE CHIEF OF POLICE

I have enough loyal men here to protect us all. They can remain in contact with my offices, and they, too, want to win.

THE ENVOY

To save what? (A PAUSE.)

THE CHIEF OF POLICE

(CROSSING DOWN LEFT TO RIGHT OF THE ENVOY.) Look, in coming to see me, you did have something definite in mind, didn't you. You had a plan? Let's hear it. (SUDDENLY A TERRIFIC BLAST. BOTH MEN, BUT NOT IRMA, FALL FLAT ON THE FLOOR.)

THE ENVOY

That may have been the Royal Palace. (RISING.) Long live the Royal Palace! (ENTER CARMEN. SHE THROWS A BLACK SHEET OVER THE CORPSE OF ARTHUR AND EXITS OFF RIGHT AREA II.)

THE CHIEF OF POLICE

(AGHAST.) But the Queen. . . . (AS HE RISES.) Then the Queen's under the rubble?

THE ENVOY

(SMILING MYSTERIOUSLY.) You need not worry. Her Majesty is in a safe place. And that phoenix, when dead, can rise up from the ashes of a royal palace. . . . But the Queen will wait for you as long as necessary. (TO

IRMA, CROSSING RIGHT TO LEFT OF IRMA. HE IS RIGHT OF CENTER AREA IV. THE CHIEF OF POLICE COUNTERS LEFT.) I must pay tribute, Madame, to your coolness. And to your courage. They are worthy of the highest respect. . . . (MUSINGLY.) Certainly, of the highest. . . .

IRMA

All the same, it was quite a blast. And the people. . . .

THE ENVOY

(SEVERELY.) That's behind you. When life departs, the hands cling to a sheet. What significance has that rag when you're about to penetrate into the providential fixity?

IRMA

Sir? Do you mean I'm at my last gasp?

THE ENVOY

(HE OFFERS HIS ARM TO RAISE HER FROM THE CHAIR, THEN, EXAMINING HER, PART BY PART.) Splendid head! Sturdy thighs! Solid shoulders!

IRMA

(LAUGHING, CROSSING A STEP DOWN RIGHT.) So I've been told, and it didn't make me lose my head. In short, I'll make a presentable corpse if the rebels act fast and if they leave me intact. But if the Queen is dead. . . .

THE ENVOY

(BOWING.) Long live the Queen, Madame.

IRMA

(CROSSING LEFT TO LEFT OF CENTER AREA IV.) Instead of standing here and talking drivel, go poke around for the Queen in the rubble of the Palace and pull her out. Even if slightly roasted. . . .

THE ENVOY

(CROSSING LEFT TO RIGHT OF IRMA.) No. A queen who's been cooked and mashed up isn't presentable. And even when alive she was less beautiful than you. (THE CHIEF OF POLICE CROSSES TO DOWN RIGHT OF THE CHAIR AS IRMA SEARCHES FOR EXCUSES.)

IRMA

Her lineage was more ancient . . . she was more ancient . . . I don't know how to talk. I'm always hemming and hawing.

THE ENVOY

All must unfold in a silence that etiquette allows no one to break.

THE CHIEF OF POLICE

(CROSSING LEFT TO THE ENVOY AND IRMA.) I'm going to have the rubble of the Palace cleared away. If, as you said, the Queen was in a chest, it may be possible to save her. (CROSSING RIGHT TO EXIT, HE IS STOPPED UP RIGHT AREA IV BY THE ENVOY'S WORDS.)

THE ENVOY

(SHRUGGING HIS SHOULDERS.) It was made of rosewood! And it was so old, so worn. . . . (TO IRMA, RUNNING HIS HAND OVER THE BACK OF HER NECK.) Yes, it requires solid vertebrae . . . they've got to carry several pounds.

THE CHIEF OF POLICE

. . . and resist the axe, don't they? Irma, don't listen to him!

IRMA

(TO THE ENVOY.) I'm really very weak, your Excellency, and very frail. Though a while ago I was boasting. . . .

THE ENVOY

(WITH AUTHORITY, DESCRIBING HIS WORDS WITH ARM GESTURES AROUND IRMA. SHE IS THE CLAY FOR THE ROYAL MOLD.) Around this delicate and precious kernel we'll forge a shell of gold and iron. (STOPPING ABRUPTLY, TURNING AWAY FROM HER, FACING OUT DOWN STAGE RIGHT; SHE FACES OUT DOWN STAGE LEFT.) But you must make up your mind quickly.

THE CHIEF OF POLICE

(PENSIVELY.) Nice and snug in her studio, all she'd have to do is nod her head. . . . (TURNS LEFT TO THE ENVOY AND IRMA.) If I'm in power, I'm willing to accept Irma as Queen.

THE ENVOY

Impossible. It's from her that you must derive your authority. She must appear by divine right. Don't forget that you're not yet represented in her studios.

IRMA

(TAKING TWO STEPS UPSTAGE.) Allow me just a little more respite. . . .

THE ENVOY

A few seconds, for time is pressing.

IRMA

(IN A HIGHFALUTIN TONE, TURNING FRONT.) In the records of our family, which goes back a long way, there was some question of . . . (THE SAME EXPLOSION IS HEARD AGAIN. THEY FREEZE.)

THE ENVOY

Perhaps that was the Royal Palace. . . . We must act fast. We're engaged in a race against the clock. It's we or they. Mme. Irma, think speedily.

IRMA

(HOLDING HER HEAD IN HER HANDS.) I'm hurrying, sir. I'm approaching my destiny as fast as I can. (CROSSING RIGHT TO CARMEN WHO HAS ENTERED FROM OFF RIGHT AREA III AND CROSSED DOWN TO CENTER AREA III.) Are our Great Figures here?

CARMEN

The gentlemen tried to return home, Mme. Irma, but the house is surrounded. They had to come back and take refuge here.

IRMA

Get them ready.

THE ENVOY

(TO CARMEN.) What about you, what's to be done with you?

CARMEN

I'm here for eternity. (EXIT CARMEN.)

THE ENVOY

One other matter, (CROSSING RIGHT TO IRMA.) a more delicate one. I mentioned an image that for some days now has been mounting in the sky of the revolution.

IRMA

The revolution has its sky too?

THE ENVOY

Don't envy it. Chantal's image is circulating in the streets. An image

that resembles her and does not resemble her. She towers above the battles. At first, people were fighting against illustrious and illusory tyrants, then for freedom. Tomorrow they'll be ready to die for Chantal alone.

IRMA

The ungrateful wretch! (CROSSING DOWN RIGHT TO THE CHIEF OF POLICE.) She who was in such demand as Lucrezia Borgia.

THE CHIEF OF POLICE

She won't last. She's like me: she has neither father nor mother. And if she becomes an image, we'll make use of it. (A PAUSE. SUDDENLY A BELL RINGS. IRMA IS ABOUT TO DART FORWARD, BUT STOPS. THE CHIEF OF POLICE CROSSES RIGHT AREA IV AND LOOKS OFF RIGHT TO FIND OUT WHAT CARMEN'S MESSAGE IS.)

IRMA

(TO THE CHIEF OF POLICE.) It's Carmen. What's she saying? What are they doing?

THE CHIEF OF POLICE

(TRANSMITTING THE MESSAGE.) While waiting to go home, they're standing around looking at themselves in the mirrors.

IRMA

Tell her to smash the mirrors or veil them. (THEN A BURST OF MACHINE GUN FIRE. A SILENCE.) My mind's made up. I presume I've been summoned from all eternity and that God will bless me. I'm going to prepare myself by prayer.

THE ENVOY

(GRAVELY.) Do you have the costumes?

IRMA

My closets are as famous as my studios. (SUDDENLY WORRIED. TO THE CHIEF OF POLICE.) George . . . this is our last minute together! From now on, we'll no longer be us. . . . (THE ENVOY DISCREETLY MOVES OFF AS THEY EMBRACE AND CROSSES UP TO STEP UNIT 11.)

THE CHIEF OF POLICE

(TENDERLY.) But I love you.

THE ENVOY

(TURNING AROUND, AND IN A TONE OF DETACHMENT; HE LOOMS DOWN AS IF OPERATING STRINGS IN THEIR MINDS.) Think of that mountain north of the city. All the labourers were at work when the rebellion broke out. . . . (A PAUSE.) I refer to a project for a tomb. . . .

THE CHIEF OF POLICE

(GREEDILY HE DROPS IRMA, CROSSING TO RIGHT CENTER AREA IV, GAZING OUT, ENVISIONING THE SCENE.) What's the plan of it?

THE ENVOY

A mountain of red marble hollowed out with rooms and niches, and in the middle a tiny diamond sentry-box.

THE CHIEF OF POLICE

Will I be able to stand there--or sit--and keep vigil over my entire death?

THE ENVOY

He who gets it will be there--dead--for eternity. The world will centre about it. About it will rotate the planets and the suns. From a secret point of the same room will run a road that will lead, after many and many a complication, to another room where mirrors will reflect to infinity . . . I say infinity. . . .

THE CHIEF OF POLICE

O.K.!

THE ENVOY

. . . the image of a dead man.

IRMA

(RUNNING LEFT, HUGGING THE CHIEF OF POLICE TO HER.) So I'll be real? My robe will be real? My lace, my jewels will be real? The rest of the world will be a copy of what I am. (MACHINE GUN FIRE.)

THE ENVOY

(CROSSING DOWN TO THEM.) Yes, but make haste. Go to your apartments. Embroider an interminable handkerchief. . . . (TO THE CHIEF OF POLICE.) You, give your last orders to your last men. (THEY RUN TO EXIT UP STEP UNIT 11 OFF UP RIGHT AREA IX; THE ENVOY CROSSES TO DOWN CENTER AREA IV AND GAZING OUT, AS IF INTO A MIRROR, PULLS A SASH WITH MEDALS ON IT FROM HIS DOUBLET AND FASTENS IT TO HIS TUNIC. HE TURNS TO EXIT LEFT, THEN

HALTS, SPEAKING OVER HIS RIGHT SHOULDER IN A VULGAR TONE.) And make it snappy. I don't have time to listen to your crap. (BLACKOUT.)

SCENE EIGHT

(THE SCENE IS THE BALCONY ITSELF, THE EDGE OF WHICH IS THE VERY EDGE OF THE ENTIRE STAGE FRONT. THERE IS A LADDER PLACED IN THE ORCHESTRA PIT, LEANING AGAINST THE BALCONY DOWN RIGHT CENTER AREA V. THROUGHOUT THE ENTIRE DUMB SHOW IS HEARD THE CREDO OF THE MASS, A LOW CHANTING REPEATING "CREDO," WHICH GRADUALLY BUILDS.

LOW AREA LIGHTS FADE UP REVEALING THE BISHOP IN CENTER AREA IX, THE GENERAL CENTER AREA II, AND THE JUDGE CENTER AREA VI. THE CHIEF OF POLICE IS PACING IN AREA XI. THE THREE GREAT FIGURES, THOUGH CLAD IN THEIR FANTASTIC GARMENTS, ARE HUMAN IN THEIR ACTIONS OF PREPARING AND STRAIGHTENING UP FOR A PUBLIC APPEARANCE. THE BISHOP CROSSES DOWN STAGE, DOWN STEP UNIT 11 TO DOWN RIGHT AREA IV. THEN THE GENERAL CROSSES DOWN AREA III TO DOWN RIGHT CENTER AREA IV. THEN THE JUDGE CROSSES DOWN TO DOWN CENTER AREA V. NOTICING THAT THE GREAT FIGURES ARE IN PLACE, THE CHIEF OF POLICE, CIGAR IN HAND, JUMPS DOWN TO DOWN LEFT AREA IV, THE ONLY ONE NOT IN FANTASY GARB. HE APPEARS QUITE DWARFED IN COMPARISON TO THE OTHER FIGURES.

THEN IRMA ENTERS UP LEFT AREA XI AS THE QUEEN, IN COTHURNI AND FANTASTIC GARB, COMPLETE WITH BAUBLES, CROWN AND SCEPTER. SHE CROSSES RIGHT AND COMES DOWN STEP UNITS 10 AND 11 TO DOWN LEFT CENTER AREA IV. SHE CLEARS HER THROAT AND ALL THE FIGURES TAKE ONE STEP FORWARD AND DROP ANY SIGNS OF A HUMAN CONDITION AS THEY WAVE TO THE MASSES, THE AUDIENCE. THE BEGGAR FROM MME. IRMA'S STUDIO OF SCENE 4 APPEARS FROM DOWN AREA VII AND RUNS UP TO UP RIGHT AREA VII, WAVING FLOWERS.)

THE BEGGAR

Long live the Queen! (CHANTAL APPEARS RUNNING UP THE LADDER. AS SHE STEPS ONTO THE STAGE DOWN RIGHT CENTER AREA V, A SHOT RESOUNDS. SHE GASPS AND FALLS, HER BODY SPRAWLED ON THE BALCONY. THERE IS SILENCE FOR A MOMENT AS THE FIGURES LOOK TO HER. THEN THEY LOOK AWAY AND RESUME THEIR WAVING TO THE AUDIENCE AS THEY EXIT. THE BISHOP AND THE GENERAL EXIT OFF RIGHT. THE JUDGE EXITS OFF LEFT. THE BEGGAR EXITS DOWN AREA VII. THE CHIEF OF POLICE, CIGAR IN MOUTH, PICKS CHANTAL UP IN HIS ARMS AND CARRIES HER OFF LEFT, AREA VII. HER RIGHT ARM AND LEG DANGLE DOWN AND FLOP AS SHE IS CARRIED OFF. THE LIGHTS FADE TO A BLACKOUT.)

SCENE NINE

(IN THE BLACKOUT ARE HEARD OFFSTAGE VOICES OF THE POPULACE. THE LIGHTS FADE UP IN IRMA'S ROOM, AREAS VI, X, XI, XII, AND XIII TO REVEAL THE THREE PHOTOGRAPHERS FROZEN AS IN ATTENTION, HANDS CLASPING THEIR CAMERAS WHICH

HANG AROUND THEIR NECKS TO THEIR CHESTS. THEY ARE DRESSED NEARLY IDENTICALLY AS CLOWNS, IN EXAGGERATION OF THE GARB OF AN EARLY 20TH CENTURY PHOTOGRAPHER. THE FIRST PHOTOGRAPHER IS FULL FRONT, LEFT CENTER AREA XII, NEXT TO AN ARM CHAIR PLACED CENTER XII FACING DOWN LEFT. THE SECOND PHOTOGRAPHER STANDS FULL FRONT UP LEFT AREA XI. THE THIRD PHOTOGRAPHER STANDS FULL FRONT UP CENTER AREA VII, BY AREA XIII. THEIR EXPRESSIONS ARE BLANK, IN SPITE OF CLOWN MAKEUP, AND THEIR ATTITUDES REMAIN AS SUCH THROUGHOUT THE SCENE. ANOTHER ARM CHAIR IS CENTER AREA XI, FACING DOWN LEFT CENTER. THREE METAL FOLDING CHAIRS ARE LINED UP ACROSS THE BACK OF AREA XIII.

THE VOICES BUILD AS THE THREE GREAT FIGURES ENTER. THE BISHOP ENTERS UP LEFT AREA XII TO DOWN RIGHT CENTER. THE JUDGE ENTERS UP LEFT AREA XI BEHIND THE CHAIR TO LEFT CENTER. THE GENERAL ENTERS FROM THE WING STAGE DOWN LEFT AREA VII TO CENTER AREA VI. THE BISHOP GIVES THE SIGN OF THE CROSS IN GARBLED LATIN, THEN THE THREE FIGURES BREATHE A SIGH OF RELIEF AND ASSUME MORE HUMAN POSTURE. THEY PICTURE THE SCENE THEY DISCUSS IN THE FAR DISTANCE, BEYOND THE AUDIENCE.)

THE JUDGE

What we've been through!

THE GENERAL

And it's not over! We have to invent an entire life. . . . That's hard.
. . .

THE BISHOP

(CROSSING RIGHT UP TO DOWN RIGHT CENTER AREA XI.) Hard or not, we've got to live. We can no longer back out. Before entering the carriage. . . .

THE GENERAL

(CROSSING UP RIGHT TO SIT DOWN RIGHT AREA XII, FEET PLACED UP LEFT AREA X.)
The way it crept along.

THE BISHOP

Before entering the carriage escape was still possible. But now. . . .
(SITS IN THE ARM CHAIR.)

THE JUDGE

Do you think we were recognized? I was in the middle, hidden by your profiles. Opposite me, Irma. . . . (THE NAME ASTONISHES HIM.) Irma? The Queen. . . . The Queen hid my face. . . . Do you think we were?

THE BISHOP

No danger of that. You know whom I saw . . . at the right (UNABLE TO KEEP

FROM LAUGHING.) with his fat, good-natured mug and pink cheeks, though the town was in smithereens? (THE OTHER TWO SMILE.) And who threw himself on my hand . . . I thought to bite me, and I was about to pull my fingers away . . . to kiss my ring? Who? My grocer. (THE JUDGE LAUGHS.)

THE GENERAL

(GRIMLY.) The way it crept along. The carriage wheels on the people's feet and hands! The dust!

THE JUDGE

(UNEASILY, CROSSING TO LEFT OF THE BISHOP.) I was opposite the Queen. Through the back window, a woman. . . .

THE BISHOP

(CONTINUING HIS ACCOUNT.) I saw her too, at the left-hand door, she was running along and throwing kisses at us!

THE GENERAL

The way it crept along. We moved forward so slowly amidst the sweaty mob! Their roars were like threats, but they were only cheering. Just flowers tossed from a window, and a people hailing its queen, who stood upright beneath her golden crown. (A PAUSE.) And the horses at a walking pace . . . and the Envoy standing on the footboard! (A SILENCE.)

THE BISHOP

(IRONICALLY.) No one could have recognized us. We were in the gold and glitter. They were blinded. It hit them in the eye. . . .

THE JUDGE

It wouldn't have taken much. . . .

THE BISHOP

(SAME.) Exhausted by the fighting, choked by the dust, the people stood waiting for the procession. The procession was all they saw. In any case, we can no longer back out. We've been chosen.

THE GENERAL

By whom?

THE BISHOP

(WITH SUDDEN GRAND ELOQUENCE, RISING, CROSSING TO DOWN RIGHT AREA XI, HIS BACK TO THE OTHERS.) By glory in person.

THE GENERAL

This masquerade?

THE BISHOP

It lies with us for this masquerade to change meaning. (CROSSING CENTER TO CHAIR, BEHIND IT TO THE RIGHT, USING IT TO EMPHASIZE HIS WORDS.) First, we must use words that magnify. We must act fast, and with precision. No errors allowed. (WITH AUTHORITY.) As for me, (CROSSES DOWN RIGHT TO DOWN RIGHT AREA XI.) instead of being merely the symbolic head of the country's church, I've decided to become its actual head. Instead of blessing and blessing and blessing, I'm going to sign decrees and appoint priests. The clergy is being organized. A basilica is under construction. It's all in there. (HE POINTS TO A FOLDER UNDER HIS ARM.) Full of plans and projects. (CROSSING TWO STEPS LEFT TOWARD THE JUDGE.) What about you?

THE JUDGE

(CROSSING TWO STEPS RIGHT TOWARD THE BISHOP.) I have an appointment with a number of magistrates. We're drafting bills, we're revising the legal code. (TO THE GENERAL.) What about you?

THE GENERAL

Oh, me, your ideas drift through my poor head like smoke through a log shanty. The art of war's not something you can master just like that. (RISES, CROSSES UP TO DOWN RIGHT AREA XII FACING RIGHT TO THE BISHOP AND THE JUDGE.) However, my staffs. . . .

THE BISHOP

(INTERRUPTING.) Like everything else, the fate of arms can be read in your stars. Read your stars, damn it!

THE GENERAL

That's easy to say. But when the Hero comes back, planted firmly on his rump, as if on a horse. . . . But, of course, nothing's happened yet?

THE BISHOP

Nothing. But let's not crow too soon. His image hasn't yet been consecrated in the brothel . . . yet. And that would be our ruin. Unless you make a positive effort to seize power. (SUDDENLY HE BREAKS OFF. THE PHOTOGRAPHERS HAVE CLEARED THEIR THROATS AS IF TO SPIT. ONE HAS SNAPPED HIS FINGERS LIKE A SPANISH DANCER. EACH PHOTOGRAPHER REMAINS FROZEN IN PLACE AS ANOTHER'S VIGNETTE OCCURS.)

THE BISHOP

(SEVERELY.) Indeed, you're here. (CROSSING DOWN LEFT TOWARD DOWN CENTER AREA XII.) Please do your job quickly, and in silence, if possible. You're to take each of our profiles, one smiling, the other rather stern.

FIRST PHOTOGRAPHER

(THE GENERAL CROSSES DOWN LEFT TO CENTER AREA VI. THE JUDGE ASSEMBLES HIMSELF AND SITS CENTER AREA XI. THE BISHOP SITS CENTER AREA XII. ALL ASSUME THE POSE OF GRANDEUR.) We'll do our job, don't worry. (TO THE BISHOP.) Get set for prayer, your Grace, because the world ought to be bombarded with the picture of a pious man.

THE BISHOP

(WITHOUT MOVING.) In fervent meditation.

FIRST PHOTOGRAPHER

Right, fervent. Get set.

THE BISHOP

(ILL AT EASE.) But . . . how?

FIRST PHOTOGRAPHER

Don't you know how to compose yourself for prayer? (ON HIS LEFT, PULLING THE BISHOP OUT OF THE CHAIR ONTO HIS KNEES DOWN CENTER AREA XII, THEN PUSHING HIS HANDS TOGETHER, LIFTING HIS HEAD UP AND POINTING HIS EYES DOWN.) Okay, facing both God and the camera. Hands together. Head up. Eyes down. That's the classical pose. A return to order, a return to classicism. (HIS LEFT ARM OUTSTRETCHED UPWARD AND INDEX FINGER UP, AS IF MAKING A POINT, A PROCLAMATION.)

THE BISHOP

(KNEELING.) Like this?

FIRST PHOTOGRAPHER

(LOOKING AT HIM WITH CURIOSITY.) That's it. . . . (HE LOOKS IN THE CAMERA.) No you're not in the frame. . . . (SHUFFLING ON HIS KNEES, THE BISHOP PLACES HIMSELF.) Okay.

SECOND PHOTOGRAPHER

(CROSSING DOWN RIGHT TO CENTER, LEFT OF THE JUDGE, PULLING HIS JAW DOWN AS HE SPEAKS.) Would you mind pulling a longer face? You don't quite look like a judge. A little longer.

THE JUDGE

Horselike? Sullen?

SECOND PHOTOGRAPHER

Horselike and sullen, my Lord. (FROM BEHIND HE PLACES THE JUDGE'S HANDS ON HIS LAP.) And both hands in front, on your brief. What I want is a shot of the Judge. (RIGHT OF THE JUDGE, ARM OUTSTRETCHED UPWARD, ASSUMING THE GESTURE GIVEN BY THE FIRST PHOTOGRAPHER TO MAKE A POINT.) A good photographer is one who gives a definitive image. Perfect. (AS HE CROSSES TO LEFT AREA XI TO LOOK THROUGH THE CAMERA.)

FIRST PHOTOGRAPHER

(TO THE BISHOP.) Turn your head. . . . just a little. . . . (HE TURNS THE BISHOP'S HEAD, TILTING IT LEFT.)

THE BISHOP

(ANGRILY.) You're unscrewing the neck of a prelate!

FIRST PHOTOGRAPHER

(RETURNING TO HIS POSITION DOWN LEFT OF THE BISHOP.) I want a three-quarter view of you praying, my Lord.

SECOND PHOTOGRAPHER

(CROSSING RIGHT TO THE JUDGE.) My Lord, if you possibly can, a little more severity . . . (PULLING DOWN THE JUDGE'S LIP.) with a pendulous lip. (CRYING OUT.) That's it! Perfect! (KISSES THE JUDGE ON THE CHEEK. LOUDLY.) Hold it! (HE RUSHES LEFT TO FOCUS HIS CAMERA, BUT THERE IS A FLASH BEFORE HE GETS THERE. THE FIRST PHOTOGRAPHER HAS JUST TAKEN HIS SHOT.)

THE GENERAL

(TO THE THIRD PHOTOGRAPHER WHO IS NOW DOWN CENTER STEP UNIT 7.) The finest pose is Poniatovsky's.

THIRD PHOTOGRAPHER

(STRIKING A POSE.) With the sword?

THE GENERAL

No, no. That's Lafayette. No, with the arm extended and the marshal's baton. . . . (GLANCING WITH EMBARRASSMENT TO HIS EMPTY EXTENDED RIGHT ARM.) Unfortunately, I don't have a baton. . . . (MEANWHILE THE FIRST PHOTOGRAPHER HAS GONE BACK TO THE BISHOP, WHO HAS NOT MOVED, AND LOOKS HIM OVER SILENTLY.)

THIRD PHOTOGRAPHER

(TO THE GENERAL.) We've got just what we need. Here, now strike the pose. (ROLLS UP A SHEET OF PAPER IN THE FORM OF A MARSHAL'S BATON. HE HANDS IT TO THE GENERAL, WHO STRIKES A POSE, AND THEN DASHES DOWN TO WHERE STEP UNITS 6 AND 7 MEET AND SITS ON THE STEPS, FACING THE GENERAL. A FLASH: THE SECOND PHOTOGRAPHER HAS JUST TAKEN HIS SHOT.)

THE BISHOP

(TO THE FIRST PHOTOGRAPHERS.) I hope that one comes out well. Now we'll have to flood the world with a picture of me receiving the Eucharist. Unfortunately, we don't have a Host on hand. . . .

FIRST PHOTOGRAPHER

Leave it to us, Monsignor. We are a resourceful bunch. (CALLS OUT.) My Lord! (THE JUDGE APPROACHES.) Lend me a hand a minute. (WITHOUT FURTHER ADO, HE TAKES HIM BY THE HAND AND SETS HIM IN PLACE TO THE RIGHT OF THE BISHOP.) But I want only your hand to show . . . there . . . roll up your sleeve a little . . . above Monsignor's tongue. More. Okay. (STILL FUMBLING IN HIS POCKET. TO THE BISHOP.) Stick out your tongue. More. Okay. (STILL FUMBLING IN HIS POCKET. A FLASH: THE GENERAL HAS JUST BEEN PHOTOGRAPHED; HE RESUMES HIS NATURAL POSE.) Damn it! I don't have a thing! (HE LOOKS ABOUT. TO THE GENERAL.) That's perfect. May I! (WITHOUT WAITING FOR AN ANSWER, HE TAKES THE GENERAL'S MONOCLE FROM HIS EYE.) Thank you! (GOES BACK TO THE GROUP FORMED BY THE BISHOP AND THE JUDGE. HE MAKES THE JUDGE HOLD THE MONOCLE ABOVE THE BISHOP'S TONGUE AS IF IT WERE A HOST, AND HE RUSHES TO HIS POSITION LEFT AREA XII AND FLASHES HIS CAMERA. AS THE QUEEN ENTERS UP LEFT AREA XI FOLLOWED BY THE ENVOY, THE PHOTOGRAPHERS AND THE FIGURES ARE FROZEN IN THEIR PLACES. A BRIEF PAUSE AS SHE OBSERVES. THE QUEEN IS RIGHT CENTER AREA XI, THE ENVOY BEHIND HER TO HER RIGHT.)

THE QUEEN

Curious. Curious method. . . . You're presenting the people with a false image. I won't tolerate . . .

THE ENVOY

It's a true image, born of a false spectacle.

FIRST PHOTOGRAPHER

(CYNICALLY WITH HUMOR, BREAKING AWAY FROM HIS FROZEN IMAGE.) That's common practice, your Majesty. When some rebels were captured, we paid a militiaman to bump off a chap I'd just sent to buy me a packet of cigarettes. The photo shows (PUTTING A CAPTION AROUND IT AS IF BIG NEWS.) a rebel shot down while trying to escape.

THE QUEEN

Monstrous!

THE ENVOY

But have things every happened otherwise? History was lived so that a glorious page might be written, and then read. It's reading that counts. (TO THE PHOTOGRAPHERS, CROSSES DOWN STEP UNIT 11 TO RIGHT AREA X.) Gentlemen, the Queen informs me that she congratulates you. She asks that you return to your posts. (THE THREE PHOTOGRAPHERS CROSS TO AREA XIII AND SIT IN A ROW IN THE METAL FOLDING CHAIRS, SECOND, FIRST, AND THIRD, RIGHT TO LEFT, CAMERAS ON LAPS. THEY ASSUME THEIR BLANK EXPRESSIONS AND STARE OUTWARD THROUGHOUT THE REMAINDER OF THE SCENE. THE GREAT FIGURES, ALL STANDING, ASSEMBLE THEMSELVES BACK INTO ORDER.)

THE QUEEN

(IN A LOW VOICE, AS IF TO HERSELF.) Isn't he here?

THE ENVOY

(TO THE THREE FIGURES.) The Queen would like to know what you're doing, what you plan to do.

THE BISHOP

(CROSSING TO DOWN LEFT AREA XII.) We've been recovering as many dead bodies as possible. We were planning to embalm them and lodge them in our heaven. Your grandeur requires your having slaughtered the rebels wholesale. We shall keep for ourselves only a few of our fallen martyrs, to whom we shall pay honour that will honour us. (STEPS BACKWARD, UP LEFT TO CENTER AREA XII, BOWING HUMBLLY.)

THE QUEEN

(TO THE ENVOY.) That will serve my glory, will it not?

THE ENVOY

(SMILING.) The massacres, too, are revels wherein the people may hate us to their heart's content.

THE QUEEN

Does that mean that leniency and kindness are of no avail? (TESTILY, CROSSING TO THE JUDGE, DOWN LEFT CENTER.) You, my Lord, what's being done? I've ordered fewer death penalties and more sentences to forced labour. I hope the underground galleries are finished? (TO THE ENVOY) It's the word galley-slaves that made me think of the galleries of the Mausoleum. Are they finished?

THE JUDGE

Completely. And open to the public on Sundays. Some of the arches are completely adorned with the skeletons of prisoners who died during the digging.

THE QUEEN

(IN THE DIRECTION OF THE BISHOP.) Very good. (THE JUDGE BACKS AWAY HUMBLY TO UP RIGHT AREA XII. THE QUEEN CROSSES TO DOWN LEFT AREA XI.) What about the Church? I presume that anyone who hasn't done at least a week's work on this extraordinary chapel is in a state of mortal sin? (THE BISHOP BOWS. TO THE GENERAL.) As for you, I'm aware of your severity. Your soldiers are watching over the workers, and they thoroughly deserve the fine name of builders. (SMILING GENTLY, WITH FEIGNED FATIGUE, TURNING FRONT AS IF TO MAKE A PROCLAMATION.) For, as you know, gentlemen, I plan to present this tomb to the Hero. You know how downcast he feels, don't you, and how he suffers at not yet having been impersonated?

THE GENERAL

(PLUCKING UP COURAGE, CROSSING UP RIGHT TO DOWN LEFT AREA XII TO JOIN THE OTHERS.) He'll have a hard time attaining glory. The places have been filled for ages. Every niche has its statue. (FATUOUSLY.) We, at least . . .

THE JUDGE

(CROSSING DOWN TWO STEPS. THE THREE GREAT FIGURES ARE NOW IN A UNIT.) That's how it always is when one wants to start from the bottom. And particularly by rejecting or neglecting the traditional. The established order of things, as it were.

THE QUEEN

(SUDDENLY VIBRANT.) Yet it was he who saved everything. He wants glory. He insists on breaking open the gates of legend; he has allowed you to carry on with your ceremonies.

THE BISHOP

(ARROGANTLY.) To be frank, Madame, we're no longer concerned with that. As for me, my skirt hampers me, and my hands get caught in the lace. We're going to have to act.

THE QUEEN

(INDIGNANTLY.) Act? You? You mean to say you're going to strip him of his power?

THE JUDGE

(CROSSING TO DOWN RIGHT AREA XII.) We have to fulfill our functions, don't we?

THE QUEEN

Functions! You're planning to overthrow him, to lower him, to take his place!

THE BISHOP

(CROSSING CENTER AREA XII TO SIT IN CHAIR AS IF THE ULTIMATE AUTHORITY.) Somewhere in time--in time or in space!--perhaps there exist high dignitaries invested with absolute dignity and attired with real ornaments.

THE QUEEN

(VERY ANGRILY.) Real! And what about those? You mean that those you're wrapped and swathed in--my whole paraphernalia!--which come from my closets, aren't real?

THE BISHOP

(POINTING TO HER ERMINE, THE SILK OF HIS ROBE, ETC.) Rabbit, sateen, machine-made lace . . . you think we're going to be satisfied with make-believe forever?

THE QUEEN

(OUTRAGED.) But this morning. . . . (SHE BREAKS OFF. ENTER THE CHIEF OF POLICE, QUIETLY, HUMBLY, FROM DOWN LEFT WING STAGE AREA VII. RUSHING DOWN LEFT TO UP CENTER AREA VI.) George, beware of them.

THE CHIEF OF POLICE

(TRYING TO SMILE.) I think that . . . victory . . . we've won the day. May I sit down? (HE SITS DOWN RIGHT CENTER AREA VI, HIS FEET HANGING OFF THE PLATFORM. THEN HE LOOKS ABOUT, AS IF QUESTIONING EVERYONE.)

THE ENVOY

(IRONICALLY.) No, nobody's come yet. Nobody has yet felt the need to abolish himself in your fascinating image.

THE CHIEF OF POLICE

That means the projects you submitted to me aren't very effective. (TO THE QUEEN.) Nothing? Nobody?

THE QUEEN

(VERY GENTLY, CROSSING TO LEFT CENTER AREA VI, DOWN TO THE CHIEF OF POLICE.) Nobody. And yet, the blinds have been drawn again. The men ought to be coming in. Besides, the apparatus has been set up; so we'll be informed by a full chorus of voices.

THE JUDGE

(MAKING HIMSELF AGREEABLE, TO THE CHIEF OF POLICE.) Yet you're feared.

THE CHIEF OF POLICE

I'm afraid that they fear and envy a man, but . . . (GROPING FOR WORDS.) . . . but not a wrinkle, for example, or a curl . . . or a cigar . . . or a whip. The latest image that was proposed to me . . . I hardly dare mention it to you.

THE JUDGE

Was it . . . very audacious?

THE CHIEF OF POLICE

Very. Too audacious. I'd never dare tell you what it was. (SUDDENLY, HE SEEMS TO MAKE UP HIS MIND.) Gentlemen, (HE RISES.) I have sufficient confidence in your judgment and devotion. After all, I want to carry on the fight by boldness of ideas as well. It was this: I've been advised to appear in the form of a gigantic phallus, (RAISING HIS CIGAR IN HIS LEFT ARM, POINTING IT UPWARD.) FIGURE 9. a prick of great stature. . . . (THE THREE FIGURES ARE DUMBFOUNDED.)

THE QUEEN

George! You?

THE CHIEF OF POLICE

What do you expect? If I'm to symbolize the nation, your joint. . . .

THE ENVOY

(TO THE QUEEN, CROSSING LEFT TO UP LEFT CENTER AREA X. THE JUDGE COUNTERS A STEP RIGHT, RIGHT AREA XII.) Allow him, Madame. It's the tone of the age.

THE JUDGE

A Phallus? Of great stature? You mean--enormous?

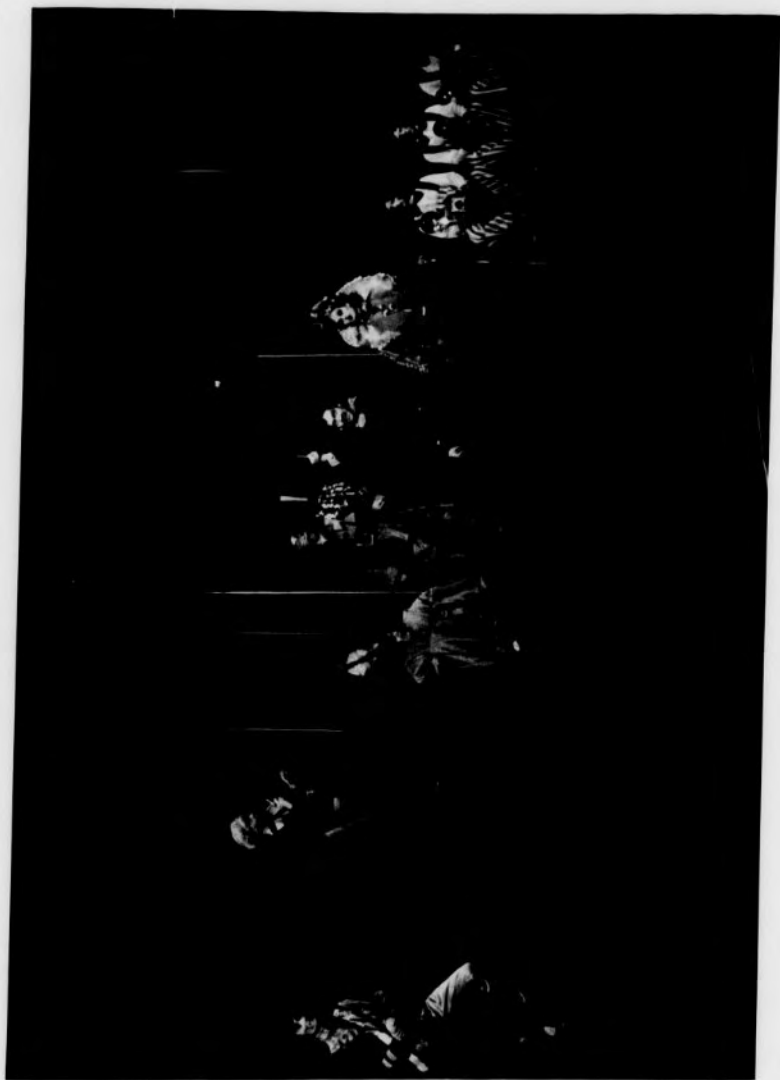


Figure 9

THE CHIEF OF POLICE

Of my stature.

THE JUDGE

. . . Very difficult to pull off.

THE ENVOY

Not so very. What with new techniques and our rubber industry, remarkable things can be worked out. No I'm not worried about that, but rather . . . (TURNING TO THE BISHOP.) . . . what the Church will think of it?

THE BISHOP

(AFTER REFLECTION, SHRUGGING HIS SHOULDERS.) No definite pronouncement can be made this evening. To be sure, the idea is a bold one. (RISES, CROSSES DOWN TO UP RIGHT CENTER AREA VI, TO THE CHIEF OF POLICE.) But if your case is desperate, we shall have to examine the matter. For . . . it would be a formidable figure-head, and if you were to transmit yourself in that guise to posterity. . . .

THE CHIEF OF POLICE

(GENTLY.) Would you like (OVER HIS RIGHT SHOULDER TO THE BISHOP.) to see the model?

THE JUDGE

(TO THE CHIEF OF POLICE, TAKING ONE STEP LEFT TO DOWN LEFT CENTER AREA XII.) It's wrong of you to be impatient. We waited two thousand years to perfect our roles. Keep hoping. . . .

THE GENERAL

(INTERRUPTING HIM, CROSSING DOWN TO DOWN LEFT AREA XII.) Glory is achieved in combat. You haven't enough illustrious Waterloos to your credit. Keep fighting, or sit down and wait out the regulation two thousand years. (EVERYONE LAUGHS.)

THE QUEEN

(VIOLENTLY, BARGING LEFT TO LEFT CENTER AREA VI, FORCING THE BISHOP TO COUNTER TO UP CENTER AREA VI. THE ENVOY UNOBTUSIVELY CROSSES RIGHT, UP STEP UNIT 11 TO RIGHT CENTER AREA XI, RIGHT OF THE CHAIR.) You don't care a damn about his suffering. And it was I who singled you out! I who fished you out of the rooms of my brothel and hired you for his glory. And you agreed to serve him. (A PAUSE.)

THE BISHOP

(FIRMLY, CROSSING RIGHT TO THE QUEEN.) It is at this point that a question, and a very serious one, arises: are you going to use what we represent, or are we (HE POINTS TO THE OTHER TWO FIGURES.) going to use you to serve what we represent?

THE QUEEN

(FLARING UP, TURNING IN PLACE IN A CIRCLE, TO STUDY EACH OF THEM.) What you represent, you? Puppets who without their (VIOLENTLY TRILLING THE "R".) rabbit, as you put it, would be nothing.

THE BISHOP

Rabbit is what it must be--the sacred image of ermine--it has the same power, obscure and beyond argument.

THE ENVOY

Sublime. Continue. (UNOBTUSIVELY, FROM THE DISTANCE. THEN HE SITS IN THE CHAIR AND OBSERVES.)

THE CHIEF OF POLICE

You have no power. I alone. . . .

THE BISHOP

(CROSSING DOWN RIGHT TO RIGHT OF CHIEF OF POLICE.) Then no one has power. But you want us to have power over the people. For us to have power over them, you must first recognize that we have power over you.

THE CHIEF OF POLICE

Never!

THE BISHOP

(ACCEPTINGLY.) Then we shall go back to our rooms, (HE CROSSES UP TO AREA XII, CENTER, IN FRONT OF CHAIR, THEN TURNS FRONT WITH A NEW FORCE.) and there continue the quest of an absolute dignity, to the point of perfection and to the point of rapture!

THE GENERAL

(CROSSING TO LEFT OF CHAIR, FONDLING HIS LEGS AND BREECHES.) My breeches! What joy when I pulled on my breeches! I now sleep in my general's breeches. I eat in my breeches, I waltz--in my breeches, I live in my general's breeches, rigged in them for all eternity. By Jove, I no longer dream.

THE JUDGE

(CROSSING TO DOWN RIGHT AREA XII, HOLDING HIS SKIRT FORWARD FOR ALL TO SEE.) I'm a dignity represented by a skirt.

THE BISHOP

(CROSSING TO DOWN CENTER AREA XII, TO THE CHIEF OF POLICE.) You see, we no longer dream. Our ornamental purity, our luxurious and barren--and sublime--appearance has been eaten away. It's gone forever. Well and good. But the taste of that bitter delight of responsibility of which I've spoken has remained with us, and we find it to our liking. Our rooms are no longer secret. You hurt us by dragging us into the light. (TURNING BACK TO HIS CHAIR, HE SITS; THE JUDGE CROSSES IN TO HIS RIGHT, THE GENERAL TO HIS LEFT. THEY ARE A TRIUMVIRATE, PASSING JUDGMENT ON THE CHIEF OF POLICE.) Whereas now, if ever I have an itch for my former self, I'll have to go on the sly to the Balcony, where there probably is a room prepared for prelates who like to be gasmen a few hours a week. No, no. . . . We're going to live in the light, but with all that that implies. We--magistrate, soldier, prelate--we're going to act in such a way as to impoverish our ornaments unceasingly! We're going to render them useful! But in order that they be of use, and of use to us--since it's your order that we've chosen to defend--you must be the first to recognize them and pay homage to them.

THE CHIEF OF POLICE

(CALMLY, BUT PACING FORCEFULLY, ALMOST AS IN A GOOSESTEP, UP TO DOWN RIGHT AREA XII.) I shall be not the hundred-thousandth-reflection-within-a-reflection in a mirror, but the One and Only, into whom a hundred thousand want to merge. If not for me, you'd have all been done for.

THE QUEEN

(TO THE CHIEF OF POLICE, CROSSING UP RIGHT TWO STEPS TO UP CENTER AREA VI.) Don't let them intimidate you. Before the revolt, there were lots of them. . . . (TO THE BISHOP.) If you hadn't had the abominable idea of having Chantal assassinated. . . .

THE BISHOP

(FRIGHTENED.) A stray bullet!

THE QUEEN

Stray or not, Chantal was assassinated in my balcony! When she came back here to see me, to visit her boss. . . .

THE BISHOP

I had the presence of mind to make her one of our saints.

THE CHIEF OF POLICE

A traditional attitude. A churchman's reflex. But there's no need to congratulate yourself. The image of her on our flag has hardly any power. (CROSSES UP TO DOWN LEFT AREA X, THEN TURNS, OVER HIS LEFT SHOULDER.) Or rather. . . . I've had reports from all quarters that owing to the possibility that she was playing a double game, Chantal has been condemned by those she was supposed to save. . . .

THE QUEEN

(ANXIOUSLY.) But then the whole business is starting all over again?

THE CHIEF OF POLICE

(PEACEFULLY, CONTENT IN ANTICIPATION, FONDLING AND PUFFING ON HIS CIGAR.) No doubt about it. Another revolt, which has nothing to do with the one I put down, is beginning to brew.

THE QUEEN

(CROSSING DOWN TWO STEPS TO LEFT CENTER AREA VI, TO HERSELF.) Will I therefore never be who I am?

THE ENVOY

(RISING FROM THE CHAIR, STILL AS IF FROM THE DISTANCE.) Never again.

THE QUEEN

Every event of my life--my blood that trickles if I scratch myself. . . .

THE ENVOY

Everything will be written for you with a capital letter.

THE QUEEN

(AS IF TALKING TO SOME UNKNOWN FORCE BEYOND THE AUDIENCE.) But that's . . . Death?

THE ENVOY

It is indeed.

THE CHIEF OF POLICE

(WITH SUDDEN AUTHORITY, TURNING, CROSSES TO DOWN LEFT AREA XI. THE ENVOY SITS IN THE CHAIR, CENTER AREA XI.) It means death for all of you. And that's why I'm sure of you. At least, as long as I've not been impersonated, because after that I'll just sit back and take it easy. (INSPIRED.)

And if we have to act . . . (CROSSES DOWN RIGHT AREA XII, TO THE BISHOP.) who will assume responsibilities? You? (HE SHRUGS.) You've never performed an act for its own sake, but always so that, when linked with other acts, it would make a bishop, a judge, a general. . . . And your dignity, which has become as inhuman as a crystal, makes you unfit for governing men. (STROLLS DOWN TO CENTER AREA VI, GESTURING TO THE QUEEN.) No, no, gentlemen, above you, more sublime than you, is the Queen. It's from her, for the time being, that you derive your power and your rights. Above her--that to which she refers--is our standard, on which I've emblazoned the image of Chantal Victorious, our saint.

THE BISHOP

(AGGRESSIVELY, RISING FROM THE CHAIR.) Above Her Majesty, whom we venerate, and above her flag, is God, Who speaks through my voice.

THE CHIEF OF POLICE

(IRRITABLY.) And above God? (A SILENCE.) Well, gentlemen, above God are you, without whom God would be nothing. And above you am I, without whom. . . .

THE JUDGE

What about the people? The photographers?

THE CHIEF OF POLICE

(WITH POWER NEVER DEMONSTRATED BEFORE.) On their knees before the people who are on their knees before God. Therefore. . . . (CROSSES UP TO LEFT AREA XII, GRABBING THE GENERAL'S ARM.)

THE GENERAL

Sir!

THE CHIEF OF POLICE

(HE FORCES THE GENERAL TO HIS KNEES TO REMAIN ON THE FLOOR, FLABBERGASTED.) Lie down! Lie down, General!

THE JUDGE

My skirt can be tucked up. . . .

THE CHIEF OF POLICE

(CROSSING RIGHT TO RIGHT AREA XII, GRABS THE JUDGE BY HIS RIGHT ARM AND FORCES HIM TO HIS KNEES.) I'm impressed. . . . Lie down! Since you want to be recognized as a judge, do you want to hold on to your dignity according to my idea of it? And according to the usual meaning attached to it? Very well. Must I therefore grant you increasing recognition along

these lines? Yes or no? (NO ONE ANSWERS.) Well, gentlemen, yes or no?
(THE BISHOP SINKS INTO THE CHAIR.)

THE QUEEN

(VERY BLANDLY, CROSSING UP TO UP CENTER AREA VI.) Excuse him, if he gets carried away. I'm quite aware of what you used to come here for: (TO THE BISHOP.) you, my Lord, to seek by quick, decisive ways a manifest saintliness. No, no, I'm not being ironic. The gold of my chasubles had little to do with it, I'm sure. It wasn't mere gross ambition that brought you behind my closed shutters. Love of God was hidden there. I realize that. You, my Lord, you were indeed guided by a concern for justice. And for you, General, it was bravery and military glory and the heroic deed that haunted you. So let yourselves go, relax, without too many scruples. . . . (ALL TOGETHER, THE THREE MEN HEAVE A DEEP SIGH.)

THE CHIEF OF POLICE

(CONTINUING AMIABLY, HE TURNS FRONT, FONDLING HIS CIGAR.) My role, unfortunately, is in motion. In short, as you probably know, it's not in the nomenclature of the brothels. . . .

THE QUEEN

In the pink handbook.

THE CHIEF OF POLICE

Yes, in the pink handbook. (TO THE THREE FIGURES.) Come now, gentlemen, don't you feel sorry for a poor fellow like me? (HE LOOKS AT THEM ONE AFTER THE OTHER. ALMOST HUMBLE, AND SUDDENLY LOOKING VERY VERY TIRED, CROSSING DOWN TO LEFT CENTER AREA X.) Wait just a little while. For the time being, I'm still loaded with future acts, loaded with actions . . . but as soon as I feel I'm being multiplied ad infinitum, then . . . then ceasing to be hard, I'll go and rot in people's minds. (OVER HIS LEFT SHOULDER, TO THE THREE FIGURES.) And you, get into your skirts again if you want to, and get back on the job. You're silent. (A LONG SILENCE.) That's right. (HE TAKES ONE STEP RIGHT.) . . . Let's be silent, and let's wait. . . . (A LONG AND HEAVY SILENCE.) Perhaps it's now . . . (IN A LOW, HUMBLE VOICE) that my deification is being prepared. . . . (EVERYBODY IS VISIBLY EXPECTANT. THEN, CARMEN ENTERS, AS IF FURTIVELY, BY UP LEFT AREA XII. THE ENVOY IS FIRST TO SEE HER. HE SILENTLY INDICATES HER PRESENCE TO THE QUEEN. THE QUEEN MOTIONS TO CARMEN TO WITHDRAW, BUT CARMEN NEVERTHELESS CROSSES DOWN LEFT IN FRONT OF THE THREE FIGURES TO UP CENTER AREA VI, ON THE QUEEN'S RIGHT. THE QUEEN COUNTERS TO THE LEFT A STEP.)

THE QUEEN

(IN AN ALMOST LOW VOICE.) I gave orders that we were not to be disturbed. What do you want?

CARMEN

I tried to ring, but the apparatus is out of order. I beg your pardon. I'd like to speak with you.

THE QUEEN

Well, what is it? Speak up!

CARMEN

(HESITANTLY.) It's . . . I don't know. . . .

THE QUEEN

(RESIGNEDLY.) Well, when at Court do as the Court does. Let's speak in an undertone. (SHE CONSPICUOUSLY LENDS EAR TO CARMEN, WHO LEANS FORWARD AND MURMURS A FEW WORDS. THE QUEEN SEEMS VERY UPSET.) Are you sure?

CARMEN

Quite, Madame. (THE QUEEN BOLTS FROM THE ROOM CROSSING RIGHT AREA VI, THEN UP, EXITING UP LEFT AREA XII, FOLLOWED BY CARMEN. THE CHIEF OF POLICE STARTS TO FOLLOW THEM AND IS STOPPED DOWN RIGHT AREA XI AS THE ENVOY INTERVENES FROM RIGHT AREA XI.)

THE ENVOY

One does not follow Her Majesty.

THE CHIEF OF POLICE

What's going on? Where's she going?

THE ENVOY

(IRONICALLY.) To embroider. The Queen is embroidering and she is not embroidering. . . . You know the refrain? The Queen attains her reality when she withdraws, absents herself, or dies.

THE CHIEF OF POLICE

What's happening outside? . . . (TURNING FRONT.) Is it possible that I may attain the stature worthy of me?

THE BISHOP

You're in the best possible position. Since they've lost everything--their hypothetical but intoxicating freedom, their guides, and Chantal--the very illustration of their efforts--you're all that's left.

THE CHIEF OF POLICE

(CROSSING DOWN TO DOWN LEFT AREA X.) So I am their only hope. In short, I am like a pool in which they behold themselves?

THE GENERAL

(DELIGHTED, WITH A BURST OF LAUGHTER, HE RISES.) And if they lean over too far, they fall in and drown. Before long, you'll be full of drowned bodies! (NO ONE SEEMS TO SHARE HIS MERRIMENT.) Oh well . . . they're not yet at the brink! (EMBARRASSED, HE GOES BACK TO HIS KNEES.) Let's wait. (A SILENCE.)

THE CHIEF OF POLICE

(HE CROSSES UP RIGHT TO CENTER AREA X.) So you really think the people had a wild hope? And that in losing all hope they lose everything? And that in losing everything they'll come and lose themselves in me? . . . When I am offered that final consecration. . . .

THE ENVOY

(IRONICALLY.) For you, but for you alone, for a second the Earth will stop rotating. . . . (SUDDENLY IRMA RUSHES IN UP LEFT AREA XI, RID OF HER QUEEN'S ROBES AND IN HER MADAME'S DRESS. SHE RUNS DOWN CENTER, DOWN STEP UNIT 11 AND FALLS INTO THE ARMS OF THE CHIEF OF POLICE.)

IRMA

George!

THE CHIEF OF POLICE

(INCREDULOUS.) It's not true. (IRMA NODS YES.) But where? . . . When?

IRMA

(DEEPLY MOVED, POINT TO STAGE RIGHT.) There! . . . Now! The Studio. . . .

THE CHIEF OF POLICE

You're pulling my leg. I didn't hear anything. (SUDDENLY IS HEARD A FULL CHORUS OF VOICES SINGING THE IN DOMINI PATRI OF THE MASS FOR THE BALCONY.) So it's true? It's for me? (HE PUSHES IRMA AWAY RIGHT AND CROSSES DOWN LEFT A STEP. SOLEMNLY, AS THE VOICES STOP.) Gentlemen, I belong to the Nomenclature! (TO IRMA.) But are you really sure?

IRMA

(THE VOICES START AGAIN, THEN STOP AFTER A FEW SECONDS. CROSSING DOWN RIGHT TO THE CHIEF OF POLICE.) It was I who received him and ushered him

into the Mausoleum studio. The one that's being built in your honour. I left Carmen behind to attend to the preparations and I ran to let you know. I'm trembling like a leaf. . . . (THE VOICES START AGAIN, THEN STOP AFTER A FEW SECONDS.)

THE BISHOP

(GLOOMILY.) We're up the creek.

THE CHIEF OF POLICE

The apparatus is working. You can see. . . . (HE CROSSES DOWN TO DOWN LEFT CENTER AREA X AND TURNS TO VIEW THE DEIFICATION TO TAKE PLACE STAGE RIGHT. IRMA IS ON HIS RIGHT.)

THE ENVOY

That is not the practice. It's filthy. . . . (HE CROSSES DOWN LEFT TO UP LEFT AREA X TO VIEW THE SCENE.)

THE CHIEF OF POLICE

(SHRUGGING HIS SHOULDERS. TO THE QUEEN.) Let's watch together. (HE PULLS IRMA INTO HIS ARMS. ALL LOOK RIGHT. THE IN DOMININI PATRI RESUMES. THE LIGHTS FADE OUT ON IRMA'S ROOM, AREAS VI, X, XI, XII, AND XIII.

THE LIGHTS FADE UP ON AREAS III, IV, AND IX TO REVEAL THE MAUSOLEUM STUDIO BATHED IN SICKLY GREEN LIGHT. THE STUDIO GIVES THE EFFECT OF BEING OF COLD STONE, THOUGH NONE IS ACTUALLY VISIBLE. A MASSIVE HANGING UNIT OF GREEN AND BLACK PLASTIC DESCENDS HAUNTINGLY UP RIGHT AREA III ONTO UP-STAGE OF STEP UNIT 3. AS THE LIGHTS FADE UP, CARMEN APPEARS UP RIGHT AREA IX, FOLLOWED BY ROGER, DRESSED LIKE THE CHIEF OF POLICE BUT IN AN EXAGGERATED STYLE AND MOUNTED ON COTHURNI. HIS SHOULDERS HAVE ALSO BEEN BROADENED. CARMEN DESCENDS 3/4 RIGHT AS SHE IS GUIDING ROGER BY HOLDING ONTO BOTH OF HIS HANDS. THEY DESCEND THE STAIRS TO THE RHYTHM OF A DRUM. THE DRUM SUBSIDES ABRUPTLY AS THEY STOP, FACING FRONT DOWNSTAGE AREA IX. CARMEN IS LEFT CENTER; ROGER IS CENTER.)

CARMEN

(HANDING HIM A CIGAR.) It's on the house.

ROGER

(TAKING THE CIGAR IN HIS MOUTH.) Thanks.

CARMEN

(TAKING THE CIGAR FROM HIM.) That end's for the light. This one's for the mouth. (SHE TURNS THE CIGAR AROUND.) Is this your first cigar?

ROGER

Yes. . . . (A PAUSE.) I'm not asking for your advice. You're here to serve me, I've paid. . . .

CARMEN

I beg your pardon, sir.

ROGER

The slave?

CARMEN

He's being untied.

ROGER

He knows what it's about?

CARMEN

Completely. You're the first. You're inaugurating this Studio, but, you know, the scenarios are all reducible to a major theme. . . .

ROGER

Which is . . . ?

CARMEN

Death. (SHE TURNS HER HEAD FRONT. THERE IS AN UNEASINESS.)

ROGER

(CROSSING TWO STEPS RIGHT, GETTING ACQUAINTED WITH HIS CIGAR, BEGINNING TO ASSUME THE CHARACTER IN ITS GRANDEUR.) And so this is my tomb?

CARMEN

(CORRECTING HIM.) Mausoleum.

ROGER

How many slaves are working on it?

CARMEN

The entire people, sir. Half the population during the day and the other half at night. As you have requested, the whole mountain will be burrowed and tunnelled. (TAKING TWO STEPS LEFT, PICTURING HER WORDS AND GESTURING,

TO DESCRIBE THE SCENE AS DOWN LEFT.) The interior will have the complexity of a termite nest or of the Basilica of Lourdes--we don't know yet. No one will be able to see anything from the outside. All they'll know is that the mountain is sacred, but, (CROSSING TWO STEPS RIGHT TO ROGER TO GET HIM INVOLVED IN THE SCENARIO. SHE HAS BEEN TOO CARRIED AWAY WITH IT HERSELF.) inside, the tombs are already being enshrined in tombs, the cenotaphs in cenotaphs, the coffins in coffins, the urns. . . .

ROGER

What about here, where I am now?

CARMEN

(WITH A GESTURE OF DISDAIN.) An antechamber. (CROSSING ONE STEP LEFT TO STEP UNIT 10.) An antechamber called the Valley of the Fallen. In a little while, you'll go farther down.

ROGER

I'm not to hope to see the light of day again?

CARMEN

But . . . do you still want to? (A SILENCE.)

ROGER

It's really true that no one's ever been here before me?

CARMEN

In this . . . tomb, or in this . . . Studio? (A SILENCE.)

ROGER

(CROSSING LEFT TO STEP UNIT 10, ADJUSTING HIS COSTUME. CARMEN COUNTERS RIGHT.) Is everything really on right? My outfit? My toupet? (THE CHIEF OF POLICE TURNS TO IRMA. THE NEXT TWO VOICES COME FROM THE DARKNESS.)

THE CHIEF OF POLICE

He knew I wear a toupet?

THE BISHOP

(SNICKERING, TO THE JUDGE AND THE GENERAL.) He's the only one who doesn't know that everyone knows it.

CARMEN

(TO ROGER, AS SHE SLOWLY FOLLOWS HIM DOWN STEP UNIT 10.) Everything was carefully planned long ago. It's all been worked out. The rest is up to you. (CARMEN HAS PASSED HIM BY HIS RIGHT AND LEADS HIM DOWN STEP UNIT 11.)

ROGER

(ANXIOUSLY.) You realize I'm feeling my way too. I've got to imagine what the Hero's like, and he's never shown himself much.

CARMEN

That's why we've taken you to the Mausoleum Studio. (CROSSING TO RIGHT CENTER AREA IV.) It's not possible to make many errors here, nor indulge your imagination. (A PAUSE. THERE SEEMS TO BE A SIGH, RELEASING THE TENSION, AS ROGER HAS DESCENDED INTO THE MAUSOLEUM STUDIO. HE ADJUSTS HIS FEET AND EYES TO THE NEW SURROUNDING.)

ROGER

Will I be alone.

CARMEN

Everything is padded. The doors are lined. So are the walls.

ROGER

(HESITANTLY, CROSSING DOWN RIGHT TO RIGHT CENTER AREA IV, LEFT OF CARMEN.) What about . . . the mausoleum?

CARMEN

(FORCEFULLY, STEPPING UP TO CENTER AREA III ON STEP UNIT 5. ROGER FOLLOWS DOWN RIGHT CENTER AREA IIII ON STEP UNIT 5.) Built into the rock. The proof is that there's water oozing from the walls. (SHE BENDS RIGHT, HAND TO EAR TO LISTEN.) Deathly silent. As for light, the darkness is so thick that your eyes have developed astounding qualities. (ROGER ATTEMPTS TO ADJUST HIS EYES, AS HE SHOULD. HE THEN GLANCES TO CARMEN AND SILENTLY SHIVERS AS IF TO CUE HER TO THE NEXT LINE OF THE SCENARIO.) The cold? Yes, the coldness of death. It's been a gigantic job drilling through the mountain. Men are still groaning in order to hollow out a gigantic niche for you. Everything proves that you're loved and that you're a conqueror.

ROGER

Groaning? Could . . . (CROSSING UP TO RIGHT OF HER. SHE COUNTERS LEFT TO DOWN LEFT CENTER AREA III.) could I hear the groaning? (CARMEN TURNS TOWARD A HOLE DUG OUT AT THE FOOT OF THE WALL, FROM UNDERNEATH DOWN RIGHT CENTER AREA X, FROM WHICH EMERGES THE HEAD OF THE BEGGAR, THE CHARACTER SEEN IN SCENE FOUR. HE IS NOW THE SLAVE.)

CARMEN

(CROSSING LEFT TO UP LEFT CENTER AREA IV, TO THE SLAVE.) Come here!
(THE SLAVE CRAWLS FROM UNDERNEATH DOWN RIGHT CENTER AREA X.)

ROGER

(LOOKING THE SLAVE OVER.) Is that it?

CARMEN

A fine specimen, isn't he? Skinny. With lice and sores. He dreams of dying for you. I'll leave you alone now. (STEPS UP ONTO DOWN LEFT STEP UNIT 11.)

ROGER

Stay. Everything always takes place in the presence of a woman. It's in order for a woman's face to be a witness that, usually. . . . (SUDDENLY, THE SOUND OF A HAMMER STRIKING AN ANVIL. THEN A COCK CROWS OFF STAGE RIGHT. HE CROSSES TO DOWN RIGHT AREA III, GAZING OFF DOWN RIGHT IN THE DISTANCE.) Is life so near?

CARMEN

(IN A NORMAL VOICE, NOT ACTING, FOLLOWING HIM TO DOWN CENTER AREA III.) As I've told you, everything's padded, but some sounds always manage to filter through. Does it bother you? Life's starting up again little by little . . . as before. . . .

ROGER

(HE SEEMS ANXIOUS.) Yes, as before. . . .

CARMEN

(GENTLY.) You were. . . .

ROGER

Yes. Everything's washed up. . . . And what's saddest of all is people saying: "The rebellion was wonderful!"

CARMEN

You mustn't think about it any more. And you must stop listening to the sounds from outside. (STAGE VOICE.) You are at home here. (POINTING TO THE SLAVE.) Make him talk.

ROGER

(HE HESITATES, THEN CROSSES LEFT TO RIGHT CENTER AREA IV, RIGHT OF THE

SLAVE, THEN PLAYING HIS ROLE. CARMEN COUNTERS TO UP CENTER AREA IV TO OBSERVE.) For you can talk? And what else can you do?

THE SLAVE

(THE SLAVE OOZES TO CENTER AREA IV, LEFT OF ROGER. LYING ON HIS BELLY.) First, bow; then, shrink into myself a little more (HE TAKES ROGER'S LEFT FOOT AND PLACES IT ON HIS OWN BACK.) like this! . . . and even . . .

ROGER

(IMPATIENTLY.) Yes . . . and even?

THE SLAVE

Sink into the earth, if it's possible.

ROGER

(DRAWING ON HIS CIGAR.) Sink in, really? (OVER HIS LEFT SHOULDER TO CARMEN WHO SHRUGS IN REPLY.) But there's no mud?

IRMA

(TO THE OTHERS.) He's right. We should have provided mud. In a well-run house. . . . But it's opening day, and he's the first client to use the Studio. . . .

THE SLAVE

(TO ROGER.) I feel it all over my body, sir. It's all over me, except in my mouth, which is open so that I can sing your praises and utter the groans that made me famous.

ROGER

Famous? You're famous, you?

THE SLAVE

Famous for my chants, sir, which are hymns to your glory.

ROGER

So your glory accompanies mine? FIGURE 10.7 (REMOVING HIS FOOT FROM THE SLAVE, HE CROSSES TO UP RIGHT CENTER, TO CARMEN.) Does he mean that my reputation will be kept going by his words? And . . . if he says nothing, I'll cease to exist . . . ?

CARMEN

(CURTLY.) I'd like very much to satisfy you, but you ask questions that aren't in the scenario.

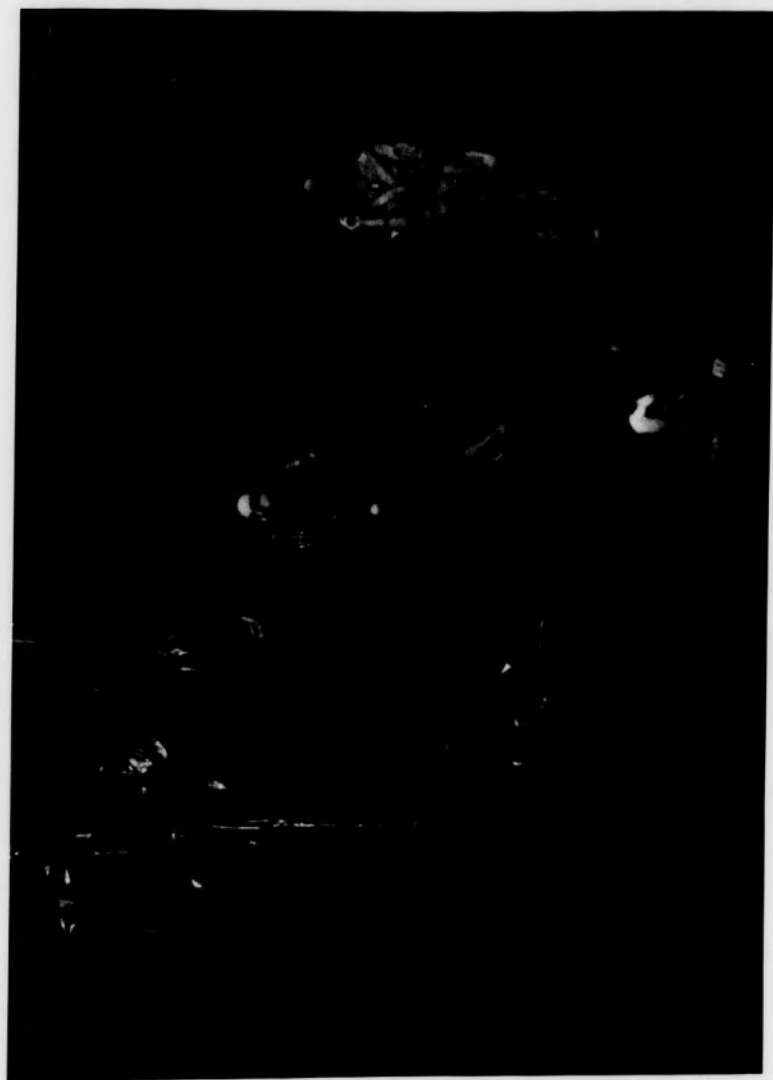


Figure 10

ROGER

(CROSSING DOWN TO RIGHT CENTER AREA IV, TO THE SLAVE, FOOT ON HIS BACK, CONTINUING WITH THE SCENARIO.) But what about you, who sings to you?

THE SLAVE

Nobody. I'm dying.

ROGER

But without me, without my sweat, without my tears and blood, what would you be?

THE SLAVE

Nothing.

ROGER

(TO THE SLAVE.) You sing? But what else do you do?

THE SLAVE

We do all we possibly can to be more and more unworthy of you.

ROGER

What, for example?

THE SLAVE

(CRAWLS TO LEFT CENTER AREA IV, ATTEMPTS TO STAND AND FALLS BACK ON HIS STOMACH.) We try hard just to stand and rot. And, believe me, it's not always easy. Life tries to prevail. . . . But we stand our ground. We keep shrinking more and more every

ROGER

Day?

THE SLAVE

(HE RAISES UP A BIT TO CONTRADICT ROGER WHO HAS ANTICIPATED HIM.) Week. (AS THE DIALOGUE CONTINUES, THE SLAVE CROSSES ON HIS STOMACH UP TO CENTER STEP UNIT 10. CARMEN COUNTERS LEFT TO LEFT CENTER AREA IV.)

THE CHIEF OF POLICE

(TO THE OTHERS.) That's not much. With a little effort. . . .

THE SLAVE

(WITH EXULTATION AS HE BEGINS TO CRAWL SIDEWAYS UP STEP UNIT 10.) With joy, Your Excellency! You're so splendid! So splendid that I wonder whether you're aglow or whether you're all the darkness of all the nights?

ROGER

(TURNING A STEP RIGHT, TO HIMSELF AS ROGER.) What does it matter, since I'm no longer to have any reality except in the reality of your phrases.

THE SLAVE

(CRAWLING UP THE STEPS.) You have not mouth nor ears nor eyes, but all of you is a thundering mouth and at the same time a dazzling and watchful eye. . . .

ROGER

(CONTINUING THE SCENARIO WITH AN INTENSE DETERMINATION SO THAT THE DESIRE AND PURPOSE BEHIND THE SCRIPT BECOMES FRIGHTFULLY APPARENT.) You see it, but do the others know it? Does the night know it? Does death? Do the stones? What do the stones say?

THE SLAVE

(STILL DRAGGING ON HIS BELLY, NOW DOWN CENTER AREA IX, HEADED TOWARD STAGE RIGHT.) The stones say. . . .

ROGER

Well, I'm listening.

THE SLAVE

(HE STOPS CRAWLING DOWN RIGHT AREA IX, HIS BODY NOW PERPENDICULAR TO THE AUDIENCE, HIS ARMS HANGING OFF THE PLATFORM, GRASPING ONTO THE FRONT OF IT.) The cement that holds us together to form your tomb. . . .

THE CHIEF OF POLICE

(FACING THE AUDIENCE AND JOYFULLY BEATING HIS BREAST.) The stones venerate me!

THE SLAVE

(CONTINUING). . . the cement is moulded of tears, spit and blood. The workers' eyes and hands that rested upon us have matted us with grief. (IN ECHO, AS HE CRAWLS OFF RIGHT INTO THE DARKNESS TO EXIT UP RIGHT AREA VIII.) We are yours, and only yours.

ROGER

(WITH RISING EXULTATION, TAKING ONE STEP LEFT.) Everything proclaims me! Everything breathes me and everything worships me! My history was lived so that a glorious page might be written and then read. It's reading that counts. (HE SUDDENLY NOTICES THAT THE SLAVE HAS DISAPPEARED, CROSSING LEFT TO LEFT CENTER AREA IV, RIGHT OF CARMEN, TO CARMEN.) But . . . where's he going? . . . Where is he? . . .

CARMEN

(CROSSING DOWN THREE STEPS.) He's gone off to sing. He's going up into the light of day. He'll tell . . . that he carried your footsteps . . . and that

ROGER

(ANXIOUSLY.) Yes, and that? What else will he tell?

CARMEN

The truth; that you're dead, or rather that you don't stop dying (CROSSES UP TO ROGER, RIGHT ARM EXTENDED UPWARD TO EMPHASIZE HER WORDS.) and that your image, like your name, reverberates to infinity.

ROGER

(TURNING AWAY FROM HER, LOOKING OUT DOWN RIGHT.) He knows that my image is everywhere?

CARMEN

(CROSSING TO DIRECTLY BEHIND HIS RIGHT.) Yes, everywhere, inscribed and engraved and imposed by fear.

ROGER

(CROSSING TO DOWN RIGHT AREA IV, CARMEN CROSSES TO RIGHT CENTER AREA IV.) In the palms of stevedores? In the games of children? On the teeth of soldiers? In war?

CARMEN

Everywhere.

THE CHIEF OF POLICE

(TO THE OTHERS.) So I've made it?

IRMA

(FONDLY.) Are you happy?

THE CHIEF OF POLICE

You've done a good job.

ROGER

(CROSSING UP TO RIGHT CENTER AREA IV, TO CARMEN.) Is it in prisons? In the wrinkles of old people?

CARMEN

It is.

ROGER

(STEPS RIGHT AWAY FROM HER TO DOWN RIGHT AREA IV.) In the curves of roads?

CARMEN

You mustn't ask the impossible. (SAME SOUNDS AS EARLIER: THE COCK AND THE ANVIL. TOTALLY OUT OF HER SCENARIO CHARACTER, IN A BUSINESS MANNER.) It's time to go, sir. The session's over. Turn left, and when you reach the corridor. . . . (THE SOUND OF THE ANVIL AGAIN, A LITTLE LOUDER. CROSSING DOWN BEHIND HIM TO HIS LEFT.) You hear? You've got to go home. . . . What are you doing?

ROGER

(PENSIVELY.) Life is nearby . . . and far away. Here all the women are beautiful. Their purpose is purely ornamental. . . . One can lose oneself in them. . . .

CARMEN

(CURTLY, CROSSING BEHIND AND AROUND TO CONFRONT HIM FROM HIS RIGHT.) That's right. In ordinary language, we're called whores. But you've got to leave. . . .

ROGER

And go where? Into life? To carry on, as they say, with my activities. . . .

CARMEN

(A LITTLE ANXIOUSLY.) I don't know what you're doing and I haven't the right to inquire. But you've got to leave. Your time's up. (CROSSES BEHIND TO PULL HIM OUT, SHE GRABS HIS LEFT ARM AND PULLS A STEP UP WHEN THE SOUND OF THE ANVIL AND OTHER SOUNDS INDICATE AN ACTIVITY: CRACKING OF A WHIP, HUMMING OF A MOTOR, ETC. SETS THEM TO A SMALL SPIN. ROGER IS NOW RIGHT CENTER AREA IV, CARMEN IS CENTER.)

ROGER

(TO HIMSELF.) They give you the rush in this place! (TO CARMEN.) Why do you want me to go back where I came from?

CARMEN

You've nothing further to do. . . .

ROGER

(HE CROSSES DOWN TO DOWN RIGHT AREA IV.) There? No. Nothing further. Nor here either. And outside, in what you call life, everything has crashed. No truth was possible. . . . (TAKING ONE STEP LEFT.) Did you know Chantal?

CARMEN

(SUDDENLY FRIGHTENED.) Get going! Clear out of here! Get out! You've no right to ask questions either. (CROSSING DOWN TO HIS LEFT.) You know that brothels are very strictly regulated and that we're protected by the police.

ROGER

No! Since I'm playing the Chief of Police and since you allow me to be here

CARMEN

You're crazy! You wouldn't be the first who thought he'd risen to power. . . . (TRYING TO PULL HIM UP STAGE BY HIS LEFT ARM.) Come along!

ROGER

(DISENGAGING HIMSELF, STEPPING LEFT TO RIGHT OF CENTER AREA IV, PENSIVELY AT FIRST, THEN FORCEFULLY, AS ALL SENSE OF THE SITUATION BECOMES CLEAR.) If the brothel exists and if I've a right to go there, then I've a right to lead the character I've chosen to the very limit of his destiny . . . no, of mine . . . of merging his destiny with mine. . . .

CARMEN

(FRANTICALLY, UP RIGHT CENTER AREA IV.) Stop shouting, sir. All the studios are occupied. Come along. . . .

ROGER

(WITH REALIZATION OF FUTILITY, HE STEPS TO CENTER AREA IV.) Nothing. Then I'm left with nothing! (HE LOOKS AT THE SYMBOLIC CIGAR IN HIS FINGERS, THEN, IN AN ATTEMPT TO MAKE A POSITIVE MOVE THROUGH ULTIMATE NEGATION, HE THROWS IT DOWN, PULLS THE KNIFE FROM THE SIDE OF HIS LEFT

BOOT WHICH SPINS HIM AROUND FULL BACK TO THE AUDIENCE. HE RAISES HIS ARM, THEN SWINGS IT DOWN AND PULLS UP, CASTRATING HIMSELF. WITH THIS ACT, RED LIGHT BATHES HIM. HIS CRUMPLED FIGURE IS ALL THAT IS SEEN AS SCREAMS COME FROM THE DARKNESS. THE LIGHTS QUICKLY FADE UP ON THE ENTIRE SET: ALL IS IN CHAOS.)

IRMA

On my rugs! On the new carpet! He's a lunatic!

CARMEN

(CRYING OUT.) Doing that here! (SHE YELLS.) Madame! Mme. Irma! (SHE RUSHES DOWN TO ROGER, SUPPORTS HIS LEFT SIDE AND DRAGS HIM ACROSS AREA III AND THEY EXIT OFF UP RIGHT AREA II. IRMA RUSHES UP STEP UNIT 11, OFF UP RIGHT AREA XI. ALL THE CHARACTERS--THE CHIEF OF POLICE, THE JUDGE, THE GENERAL, THE BISHOP--SLOWLY RESUME COMPOSURE. ALL SEEM WEAK FROM THE SHATTERING EPISODE EXCEPT THE ENVOY WHO MOVES UNOBTUSIVELY UP STEP UNIT 11 TO RIGHT CENTER AREA XI. THE CHIEF OF POLICE JUMPS OFF AREA X TO LEFT CENTER AREA IV AND TAKES A PUFF ON HIS CIGAR. HE IS PLEASED TO HAVE BEEN IMPERSONATED IN THE BROTHEL.)

THE CHIEF OF POLICE

Well played. He thought he had me. (HE PLACES HIS RIGHT HAND ON HIS FLY, VERY VISIBLY FEELS HIS BALLS AND, REASSURED, HEAVES A SIGH.) Mine are here. So which of us is washed up? He or I? Though my image be castrated in every brothel in the world, (CROSSING TO CENTER AREA IV AND SPEAKS OVER HIS LEFT SHOULDER.) I remain intact. Intact, gentlemen. (A PAUSE.) That plumber didn't know how to handle his role, that was all. (HE CALLS OUT JOYFULLY.) Irma! Irma! . . . Where is she? (TURNING FRONT, LOOKING AROUND.) It's not her job to dress wounds.

IRMA

(ENTER FROM STAGE LEFT, AREA VII, CROSSING OVER STEP UNITS 7 AND 6 TO CENTER AREA IV, LEFT OF THE CHIEF OF POLICE.) George! The vestibule . . . the rugs are covered with blood . . . the vestibule's full of clients . . . We're wiping up as best we can. . . . Carmen doesn't know where to put them. . . .

THE ENVOY

(BOWING TO THE CHIEF OF POLICE.) Nice work.

THE CHIEF OF POLICE

(TAKING A STEP RIGHT.) An image of me will be perpetuated in secret. Mutilated? (HE SHRUGS HIS SHOULDERS.) Yet a low Mass will be said to my glory. Notify the kitchens! Have them send me enough grub for two thousand years.

IRMA

(STEPPING RIGHT TO HIM.) What about me? George, I'm alive?

THE CHIEF OF POLICE

(WITHOUT HEARING HER.) So. . . . I'm. . . . Where? Here, or . . . a thousand times there? (HE POINTS TO THE TOMB, THE HANGING PIECE DOWN ON STEP UNIT 3 OF UP RIGHT AREA III.) Now I can be kind . . . and pious . . . and just. . . . (CROSSING TO BELOW RIGHT CENTER AREA IV.) Did you see? Did you see me? There, just before, larger than large, stronger than strong, deader than dead? So I've nothing more to do with you.

IRMA

George! But I still love you!

THE CHIEF OF POLICE

I've won the right to go and sit and wait for two thousand years. (TO THE PHOTOGRAPHERS, CROSSES IN FRONT OF IRMA TO RIGHT CENTER AREA V, POSING QUARTER FRONT WITH CIGAR IN RIGHT HAND IN HIS MOUTH.) You! Watch me live, and die. For posterity: shoot! (THREE ALMOST SIMULTANEOUS FLASHES. TAKING ONE STEP DOWN, SPEAKING OUT BEYOND THE AUDIENCE.) I've won! (HE WALKS RIGHT IN FRONT OF IRMA VERY SLOWLY. THE THREE PHOTOGRAPHERS CASUALLY LEAVE BY THE LEFT WING, OFF UP RIGHT CENTER AREA XIII.)

IRMA

But it was I who did everything, who organized everything. . . . Stay. . . . What will (SUDDENLY A BURST OF MACHINE GUN FIRE.) You hear!

THE CHIEF OF POLICE

(IRMA HALTS THE CHIEF OF POLICE WITH HER WORDS UP RIGHT AREA IV. OVER HIS LEFT SHOULDER.) Think of me! (THROWS HIS CIGAR OVER HIS LEFT SHOULDER TO CENTER AREA IV. THE JUDGE AND THE GENERAL STEP FORWARD TO STOP HIM, BUT JUST AS THE CHIEF OF POLICE ENTERS THE TOMB THROUGH THE PLASTIC HANGING UP RIGHT AREA IV, STEP UNIT 3, THERE IS A SECOND BURST OF MACHINE GUN FIRE.)

THE JUDGE

(CROSSING DOWN TO DOWN RIGHT AREA XII.) Don't leave us alone!

THE ENVOY

(TO THE JUDGE, ALLEGORICALLY.) Be careful, you'll get your fingers caught. (THE CHARACTERS REMAIN BEWILDERED FOR A MOMENT. A THIRD BURST OF MACHINE GUN FIRE.)

IRMA

(HAVING PASSIVELY WATCHED THE CHIEF OF POLICE ENTER HIS DESTINY.) Gentlemen, (SHE TURNS FRONT, SPEAKS OVER HER LEFT SHOULDER.) you are free.

THE BISHOP

But . . . in the middle of the night?

IRMA

(INTERRUPTING HIM.) You'll leave by the narrow door that leads into the alley. There's a car waiting for you. (SHE NODS COURTEOUSLY. THE THREE FIGURES EXEUNT OFF LEFT, UP RIGHT CENTER AREA III. A FOURTH BURST OF MACHINE GUN FIRE. SHE TURNS FRONT.) Who is it? . . . Our side? . . . Or rebels? . . . Or? . . .

THE ENVOY

(SPEAKING IN A COVERED, OMNISCIENT TONE. HE SEEMS TO HAVE JUST APPEARED, BUT HAS BEEN RIGHT CENTER AREA XI.) Someone dreaming, Madame. . . .

IRMA

(IN A DIFFERENT TONE, MORE REAL, AS IF SHE AND THE ENVOY ARE IN TOTAL UNDERSTANDING.) . . . Irma. . . . Call me Mme. Irma and go home. Good night, sir.

THE ENVOY

(HALF BOWING AS HE STEPS BACKWARD TO UP RIGHT AREA XI.) Good night, (A BRIEF PAUSE.) Mme. Irma. (THE ENVOY EXITS, OR RATHER DISAPPEARS, UP RIGHT AREA XI.)

IRMA

(ALONE, SHE PAUSES A MOMENT, LOOKS ABOUT HER, THEN CROSSES TO LEFT CENTER AREA V.) It took so much light . . . (RAISES HER RIGHT ARM ABOVE HER HEAD AND SNAPS HER FINGERS. THE LIGHTS FADE DOWN AREAS VI, VII, XII, XIII. SHE THEN CROSSES TO CENTER AREA IV.) A hundred a month for electricity! Thirty-eight studios! Every one of them gilded, and all of them rigged with machinery so as to be able to fit into and combine with each other (SNAPS FINGERS AS BEFORE AND THE REMAINING LIGHTS GO OUT EXCEPT FOR A FAINT SPOT UP RIGHT AREA IV ON THE TOMB AND LIGHT BATHING AREA IV.) And all these performances so that I can remain alone, mistress and assistant mistress of this house and of myself. (SHE THEN CROSSES TO UP RIGHT CENTER AREA IV, SNAPS HER FINGERS AS BEFORE. THE TOMB LIGHTS GO OFF. THEN SHE SNAPS AGAIN TO TURN THEM BACK ON. ALL THAT IS NOW VISIBLE IS A GLOW OF THE TOMB, WHICH FADES QUICKLY, AND MADAME IRMA WHO MOVES IN A SPOT OF LIGHT.) Oh no, that's the tomb. He needs light, for two thousand years! . . . and food for two thousand years . . .

(SHE SHRUGS HER SHOULDERS, THEN CROSSES TO TWO STEPS DOWN FROM CENTER AREA IV.) Oh, well, everything's in working order, and the dishes have been prepared. Glory means descending into the grave with tons of vic-tuals! . . . (SHE CROSSES LEFT TO RIGHT CENTER AREA V AND CALLS OUT, FAC-ING THE WINGS.) Carmen? Carmen? . . . Bolt the doors, my dear, and put the furniture covers on . . . (SHE TURNS ONE QUARTER FRONT, FACING DOWN CENTER AREA IV, BUT OUT BEYOND THE AUDIENCE, THEN STROLLS TOWARD DOWN CENTER AREA IV.) In a little while, I'll have to start all over again . . . put all the lights on again . . . dress up. . . . (A COCK CROWS.) Dress up . . . ah, the disguises! Distribute roles again . . . assume my own. . . . (ABOVE DOWN CENTER AREA IV, FACES THE AUDIENCE AND SPEAKS DIRECTLY TO THEM.) Prepare yours . . . (STEPPING TO THE EDGE OF THE STAGE, DOWN CENTER AREA IV.) judges, generals, bishops, chamberlains, rebels who allow the revolt to congeal, I'm going to prepare my costumes and studios for tomorrow. . . . (TAKES A STEP RIGHT, BEGINNING TO EXIT, BUT TURNS BACK TO THE AUDIENCE WITH AN AFTERTHOUGHT.) You must now go home, where everything--you can be quite sure--will be falser than here. . . . You must go now. You'll leave by the exits and through the alley. . . . (SHE EXTINGUISHES THE LAST LIGHT.) It's morning already. (A BURST OF MACHINE GUN FIRE. IRMA EXITS IN A BLACKOUT AS THE MACHINE GUN FIRE FADES INTO THE AGNUS DEI OF THE MASS FOR THE BALCONY.)

CHAPTER III

ACHIEVEMENT OF DIRECTORIAL APPROACH

Achievement of Interpretation

Interpretation involves a director's ability to make choices so that the composite elements of the production communicate a statement to the audience. The director chose to use Bernard Frechtman's translation of Genet's revised version of The Balcony (1962). Deletions and additions to her production script were defined by using Frechtman's translation of Genet's original version (1958) and the original French script (1956). where the director felt the impetus of the play was being overstated, deletions were made internally within speeches to maintain the rhythm the director established as necessary for the production's visceral approach. These deletions alleviated the script's tendency to pedantically bore the audience. Frechtman's phraseology is British and refers to places and objects which the director felt would be unfamiliar to the audience. Therefore, additions as rewrites were made in a few instances. These additions were either taken from the original version or done in the American vernacular for clarification.

In chapter one of this thesis, the director defined her approach to production of The Balcony as following the premises of Artaud's Theatre of Cruelty. In regard to The Balcony, this entails infesting the audience with an inverted world which creates a frenzy

prohibiting cognizant thought and thereby forces the abandonment of civilized constructions. The awareness of individual isolation in a mock civilized world allows the participant to recognize his actual union with the other participants on the deeper, archetypal level of the collective unconscious. In modified terms, this infers that Truth lies within each individual.

In her production of The Balcony, the director sought to coordinate the audience world to the inverted world of the perverted brothel. Both societies have lost sight of Truth by living for salvation in image instead of maintaining an awareness of the Truth, or function, from which the image has evolved. The director felt that participation in the experience of The Balcony would allow the audience to discern its ability to change civilized life.

The director defined participation in The Balcony as analogous to partaking in the Christian Mass. Both forms involve a ritual searching for oneness with the Truth of human existence. The ritual form of the Mass is equivalent to the ritual form of events in Madame Irma's brothel according to the following cycle: the need for Mass (beginning with sin), repentance and forgiveness. The slate is then blank for sin again as the cycle repeats infinitely. The whorehouse ritual is congruous: the sexual drive of pursuit, conquest, then readying for pursuit again. For example, The Bishop cannot exist without The Penitent. The actual act has become the reality just as the Mass has become reality. Yet the experience of the Mass experiences its Truth. Genet purports to have his audience delve as

deep to find the Truth from which the image of the reality of civilization has sprung.

The director and designer conceived the stage as being set conceptually and physically for the ritual enactments of the brothel. Through repeated rites inherent within the script, evolve conceptualization of the Truths that have caused the rites to develop.

The concepts of Mass and ritual have also been defined by the director as congruous to game strategy. The Bishop must make The Penitent a sinner in order for him to be The Bishop. Sin must have occurred for the Mass to exist. Civilized man plays at acting tragically, having accepted fates and cruelties. Yet, he has not confronted their Truth. Dark comedy is everpresent with Mass and ritual action because the powers are in guise, not real, and do not incite tragic downfall but merely assume the image of such.

Achievement of Style

The director defined the dream state as man's most vulnerable position in subjugation to the Cruelties, or Truths of existence. In such a state is man most attuned with the collective unconscious. Since a dream state dictates elements of extended reality, a surrealistic approach to style evolved. To establish the Mass/Dream atmosphere, the director began with the concept of a void and surrounded that with a musical "Mass for The Balcony," written by two fellow graduate students. The choral music was performed by the celebrants of the ritual, the actors. Though a highly intellectual construction

of the production concept, the music created a mood of grandeur, splendour and solemnity. This helped to make the events of the brothel comically ludicrous.

The set, though in concept highly correct for interpretation, was unable to fulfill its qualitative demands. Defined in Chapter One to be a sterile void, analogous to the set on which a dream may occur, an exterminated unit set was employed. The set was highly effective for the movement the director wanted within each scene. However, an inability to isolate areas with lighting caused the scene changes to interrupt the pace of the production. Curtained areas for escape routes in black-outs would have facilitated the problem. One committee member brought up the fact that the set could have been a gold void, the auditorium itself being gold. However, the director wanted the darkness of the black set to play off of man's natural fear of the unseen.

In Chapter One, the director established the infeasibility of using actual mirrors on the set. Instead, metal poles were used as suggestive pieces. The director realized that not having actual mirrors made much of the integral character movement confusing to the audience. She realizes that mirrors are an essential factor to production of The Balcony and should be used even if the set must be designed around their presence. The lack of mirrors also subtracted from the concept of infinity and ritual action.

The set pieces were also inconsistent. The abstracted forms and hangings utilized for the various fantasy chambers were highly

effective, but a greater contrast in reality should have been established for those pieces of the more "real" layer of Irma's office and the revolutionary plateau. The set piece used to indicate Madame Irma's remote control brothel viewer was distracting as its construction did not convey its function. The unit should have been present throughout the scenes in her office merely as an added element of defining the various worlds of the brothel and levels of reality.

With the demand that all the theatrical elements be larger than life, the director did not allow simply the accoutrements of the characters and their surroundings to carry the basic thrust of the human condition. The director believes she imposed movement, vocal pattern, rhythmic choice and gesture in several instances. She feels this was due primarily to working for a result of symbolic gesture established as necessary in Chapter One of her thesis. She was also working with actors who were not trained in the extenuated style of acting proposed as necessary for the desired result, able to create physical gestures symbolic of characters.

The director believes the interpretation of all of the characters to have been consistent with her concept of the play except in the case of *The Photographers*. This is also a criticism of the Thesis Committee who felt the characters should have been more sacreligious. The director, defining *The Photographers* as elements of the world outside the world of the brothel, wanted to show them as ludicrously congruous to the audience world. She therefore defined them as clowns. The comment would have been stronger if they had

rather been overly civilized and real, with their actions making the comment.

The Whore characters were also criticized by the committee as not being sensual. Their costumes were too clownlike and were not conducive to their movements. The actress playing Madame Irma was not comfortable in the cothurni of the Queen's costume which accounted for some audience uneasiness.

The director feels she was not totally correct in defining some of the worlds, or layers, of the play in acting style. Greater definition should have been made in character, costume and make-up between the "real" events of the brothel and the fantasy events. For the most part, the "real" elements should have been more realistic than abstract. The surrealistic aspect should have evolved more from the actual working of the play, rather than an imposed expressionism.

The director strove for the production elements to be symbolic, to relate to the core of human emotions as universalities. The music was ritualistic in its incantatory tones. The lighting, though limiting in its isolatory properties, created some symbolic effects in terms of color and direction. The actors, though imposed upon, evolved their characters as masks of their pains and were heightened images of their reality in both costume and make-up. Rhythmical movement of body and voice patterns equated with certain character types were developed analogous to the instruments of the actors. The director was specific in casting actors vocally, physically and rhythmically according to what she felt the character quality demanded.

Achievement of Mood

The director believes the basic use of symbolic elements gave austerity to the production. The extension of these elements lent to the quality of the grotesque. Her criticism, again, is that the real elements should have been more so, in order that the mood they created could have been in greater contrast and interruption to the fantasy moods.

The dark and flowing set established an eerie sensation of continuation. The metal pipes lent a harsh steel-like quality. The various set pieces established mood most concisely in the fantasy scenes. Once again, the director's criticism is that the "real" or business office scenes should have been more realistic. The lighting was highly theatrical in source and color.

Scene One (The Bishop) established solemnity and austerity with The Bishop in opulent garb, the altar perched high above him, and the cross, down-lit in red, high above that. When the touches of the "real" world entered, such as Madame Irma or the interruption of gunfire, the mood would humourously shift as the character dropped his pretense and became clumsily human. A more horrific mood was set with the less warmly lit and horizontally moving Scene Two of The Judge's Chamber. In Scene Three (The General's) the lighting and movement began realistically, then shifted into the grotesque, full of movement and light. The movement of the scene flowed through several physical levels as The General's act was not much interrupted by outside forces. One of the most effective pieces of mood lighting

was a golden stream of light leading The Pony across the stage as she led her master on to his funeral. For Scene Four, The Beggar and his wig of maggots, the set was back-lit in murky greenish tones giving a slimey effect to the infinite flowing set.

The reality of the brothel was established with the entrance into Madame Irma's quarters in Scene Five. The lighting and set pieces were more realistic, though the ultimate quality was not defined. The reality of the revolution outside became more emphatic and threatening in this scene with the entrances of persons from outside. The revolution arises in Scene Six. The revolutionaries appeared from the depths of the orchestra pit. The scene was starkly lit. Smoke bombs and lobsterscopes created a feeling of immediacy which greatly enhanced the movement and energy of the scene. The Funeral Studio of Scene Seven was enhanced by the initial effect of bombs. The area was dark, cold and starkly lit. Murky drapes hung about in a moldy effect.

Scene Eight, the balcony itself, where the ludicrous transformation of characters occurs, was most eery in its solemnity. The stage was empty. Each of The Great Figures walked into an individual pool of white light downstage to assume reality for the masses of the world outside the brothel. Scene Nine brought a bright return to Madame Irma's chambers. The masses had now accepted The Great Figures for reality. The Photographers brightly clicked away in the most humorous scene. The second section of Scene Nine takes place in the Mausoleum Studio, where the ultimate consecration of The Chief of Police occurs. The grotesque mood for this studio was set by the

descending movement of Carmen and Roger down two flights of steps, by the grovelling of The Beggar, the huge slimy greenish-gray drapes, and by the austere, indirect lighting. The green and red lighting for Roger's act of castration brought the scene to a whirring and stark climax.

When Madame Irma closes up shop for the night, the impact was of returning to a calmer bareness. Warmer white light pushed the set outward towards infinity. Then it was extinguished area by area as the audience was urged homeward to their own fantasies.

The basic mood established was of the austere and unknown. The mood was achieved by the highly theatrical use of grotesque and splendiferous, funny but frightening elements. The atmosphere contrasted with the dry humour of the script to create a highly sophisticated production.

Achievement of Rhythm, Tempo and Pace

The play is divided into nine individual scenes, each having its own rhythm, tempo and pace. The overall pacing of the production was hindered in part by the length of time taken for scene changes. The interrupted pacing effected the rhythm of the play as the tempo became disjointed.

Regarding the rhythm of the production, the first three scenes established themselves as similar entities, each scene building with an orgasmic pace and tempo to a point of climax and resolution. Scene four completed the same rhythmic unit, though composed of fewer paced beats.

Scene Five repeated the same rhythmic unit on three counts: one for Carmen, one for Irma, and one for The Chief of Police. The combination of these units created an overall rhythm of the scene which found its climax in the shooting of Arthur. The tempo was interrupted in part by the actress playing Irma, who was unable to establish the rhythm and tempo of her character to the director's satisfaction. Her pacing thereby extenuated the tempo of those scenic units since their impetus was dependent on her.

Scene Seven takes place in Madame Irma's Funeral Studio. It is, therefore, slower in tempo than the previous scene. However, the brothel retreat has now been fully effected by the impetus of the revolution and is of a faster, more urgent tempo than the previous brothel scenes. The faster tempo lent to the orgasmic rhythm which emphasizes, at its climax, the decision of The Chief of Police that The Great Figures may assume the reality of those whom they are imitating.

Scene Eight, The Great Figures on the balcony of the brothel, established the most lengthy and regulated pacing. The Greco section of "The Mass" added intensity to the scene, as the voices built in volume and intensity, establishing the most austere moment of the play. In the next instant, Chantal crawls up from the depths, is shot, and is "matter-of-factly" carried off. This moment, though strong in itself, was not strong enough to distract from the symbol The Great Figures had become for the masses. A contradiction was thus implied, the director's desired effect. Intermission was here established as the denouement of the scene. The first unit of the play had been defined: The Great Figures assuming their actuality.

Scene Nine became more frantic and comic in nature as the Figures played at their reality. The tempo built to the more horrific point where reality was indistinguishable. The climax of Scene Nine is the inserted section where Carmen takes Roger (as The Chief of Police) into the Mausoleum. The sub-scene builds to the climax of Roger's ultimate act of castration. The act defines the reality and ultimate climax of the play. Thence onward is the denouement of the theatrical piece. A slower, more resigned tempo ensued until the final outburst of machine-gun fire came to signify the end, and therefore the beginning, of the cyclical action of the play.

The overall rhythm of the play is equal to the rhythm established in each of the nine scenes. The director feels her production fulfilled the rhythmic demands of the play, but that the tempo and pacing was at times imposed to achieve the desired effect. She also believes that the overly lengthy scene changes interrupted the general tempo. However, the hindrance was greatly reduced with the continuing run. The set did facilitate rhythmic movement for the individual scenes.

The tempo was often not up to par in scenes where the character of Irma was the driving impetus, due to reasons previously discussed. Also the outside elements of the revolution could have been a greater driving force. If individual elements had coordinated with the whole, directorial imposition would have been less evident.

The Actor-Director Relationship

The director believes the actor-director relationship evolving during rehearsals of The Balcony was at times painful, but was conducive to the intensity of the piece. Due to the highly specified concepts of production, the director was overly demanding of what she wanted from each characterization. Though this demand worked effectively for some actors, she failed to tune in to others, who were therefore unable to bring to the rehearsal what she required. The overall problem was one of imposition. This evolved from the director's attempt to attain from her actors the highly specialized style of acting discussed previously in Chapter One.

The director tried to help each actor discover his or her affinity with the play, not only as a character, but as the actor playing the character in the presentational game of the play. For this to be a reality, the actor was required to be actually objective, and yet merge with the ups and downs of what was happening to the character. The director feels she should have aided those weaker in nature in establishing a third eye to prevent immersion into the flow of the play.

Most success was gained with the more experienced actors who brought more to rehearsal. The director feels she established from the beginning of the rehearsal period a knowledge of what she wanted. The less experienced actors went for the product, or result, instead of discovering a reality through the process. The director would often drill the actors in the technical result, hoping it would

cause examination of the process. However, she failed to realize that those less experienced were more concerned with achieving results for director approval.

The technical approach utilized by the director to attain substance underneath failed most with the character playing Madame Irma. Other factors were involved. The actress was sharing time with another main stage production. She was not the director's first choice, but when the woman first cast was unable to accept the part, the director was thankful to have such a competent substitute. The problem lay in the director's inability to communicate what she wanted and in the actress's inability to stretch beyond her technical training. Though possessing a fine voice, her body could not move coherently with the thoughts and emotions of the script. The director's efforts to correct this led to the actress giving a tense and somewhat stilted performance.

The problem was also evident with the very technically competent actor playing The Court Envoy. His training had been similar to that of the previously mentioned actress. Categorically, the director feels she was unable to get to the insides of these two older, technically trained actors, whose comprehension of doing, and then seeing where the process had explored, was limited. Perhaps the director should have tried a more realistic approach. However, she felt she needed a resultant rhythmic and visual product for the impact of the overall production.

The other specific actor-director problem evident was with the actress playing the part of Chantal. A close friend of the

director's at the time, the actress tried too hard to get at what she felt the director wanted, rather than relying on her own resources. Basically a nervous and insecure girl, the actress would react forcefully in the opposite direction. She was late to one rehearsal, then stated she was ill and could not work. The director recognized the illness as psychologically based in fear and the actress' attempt to withdraw from commitment to the production. In front of other cast members, the director allowed the actress to make the decision to leave, but made it clear that she was aware of the actress' fear, that there was no need for it, and that the only way to absolve herself of it was to make a strong move against it. The scene developed harshly with the director giving the actress an ultimatum of remaining in the show or not. If the choice was made to stay in the production, she would have to face up to her insecurities, often causing her to be brash to others, and become a cohesive member of the ensemble. The actress painfully accepted, stayed with the production, and gave a valid performance.

Though the other cast members commented to the director that she had handled the situation well, the director still found it ethically embarrassing that a verbal battle had ensued. She thinks there is a stronger method of maintaining control and respect. She feels she should distance her personal/emotional relationships in the confines of a rehearsal situation.

An attitude problem evolved with the actor portraying The First Photographer, also a close friend of the director's. The actor, another graduate student, was dissatisfied with the seeming insignificance

of his part and radiated a lack of concern, a negative attitude. In this case, the director chose to speak privately with this more mature actor. She asked, though he might not agree with the interpretation of the play, that he go along with the concepts established by the director in her initial thesis. The problem dissolved.

The director feels most successful in overcoming what she initially thought would be a problem. The very talented actor playing the part of Roger possessed little discipline and ease in working with others. He was often known as a smart aleck. His acting, therefore, tended to venture from a truthfulness into an embarrassed commenting. When the first glimpse of a problem was seen, the director approached the actor with her estimations. The actor accepted her analysis and thence forth worked honestly to combat his difficulties. When he would slip into negative acting and personal habits, such that would hinder the impetus of the production, the director would give her observations and he would discipline himself again. The director found that offering her honest and positive evaluation of his work in private was the most effective stimulus. The actor gained confidence and became a more disciplined and pleasant worker. His commitment to his role gave the character a powerful honesty in all but one of the five performances.

The director felt successfully at ease in working with the remaining actors. Those playing The Chief of Police, Arthur and Carmen seemed to bring the most to rehearsals and were the most confidently committed to their jobs. The director felt like merely a guide. This relationship was also true with the young actress

playing The Pony, naturally talented and able to fill the demands of her part. The actors playing The Bishop, The Judge, and The General were willing and eager to do anything the director suggested, but needed prodding due to unfamiliarity with expected actor homework.

In evaluating performance as related to the actor-director relationship, the director summarizes that, in general, the less confident actors gave performances with imposed overtones. The more experienced, relaxed and resourceful actors showed no hint of imposition and seemed to have been able to find, with the director's guidance, what the conceptualized production demanded.

The director surmises that her most important lesson learned regarding the actor-director relationship is of the positive impact a director gives when she expresses confidence in an actor's work. Offering honest estimations of where they are as people and performers seems helpful in establishing free groundwork for an actor to be open about his needs and insecurities. The director should retain her confidence, openness and the ability to accept new thoughts. The director must also maintain a firm but unobvious grip on her ensemble.

This director feels that her strength in approaching the production of The Balcony lay in her homework and in her knowledge of what she deemed necessary for concretizing her concepts. However, she feels that the pressures of fulfilling a thesis analysis magnified a close-mindedness at times in being sensitive to the needs and creative input of others involved.

To promote creative output from the actors, the director employed various methods of encouragements. Initially, she met with

each actor informally to discuss and develop a full reality for each character background. She asked each actor to bring his thoughts and homework to the meeting. The only guidelines were those established by the script. Each actor/character developed his reasons for being where he was in the play as well as a fictitious biography. In this way, the director was able to assure herself of some part of the actors' homework.

The next step was to encourage each group of actors to meet informally to explore their relationships. These groups evolved around the characters who entered the whorehouse and the relationships that evolved in each scenario: The Bishop and The Penitent; The Judge, The Thief and The Executioner; The General and The Pony; Irma and Carmen; Irma and The Chief of Police; Roger and Chantal; Roger and Carmen. The director asked each group to keep in mind specifically the concepts of domination and submission. The director did not ask to know or control what occurred in each meeting. What transpired was to be kept confidential. The director preferred that the intimacy maintained be equal to that which the characters believed was in the brothel. From the actor relationships which developed, the director feels this method was effective.

A series of warm-up exercises involving the entire cast took place over the four week rehearsal period. The sessions took place approximately three times per week. The exercises were two-fold in purpose: to warm up the actors physically and mentally, and to create a trusting ensemble.

The first session began with basic vocal and physical exercises. In a series of standard improvisational exercises, the actors vocalized what happened with their bodies and physicalized their vocal needs. The simple large group exercises, such as conducting an orchestra of voices or creating a machine, were shared with all the members, each having opportunity to lead or be the impetus of the exercise.

The next series concerned each actor's becoming attuned to himself and his relationship to his physical acting area; its space, textures and density. The actors were then asked to relate to the other actors they had scenes with and were guided along from Scenes One through Nine.

The next category of exercises asked the grouping of actors to communicate with each other, physically but non-verbally. The purpose being to develop emotional communication between the actors and to alleviate concern with the audience. After the trust of communication was established, the groups were asked to repeat their improvisations, this time extending outward with awareness of the audience. The purpose here was: to establish the reality of the situation, to create the audience as an integral character, and to have the actor fulfill character objective rather than audience demand. The actors were then asked to think about the character relationships and patterns that had evolved outside the confines of the given plot: What did the movement reveal about the character? What did it communicate to the audience? How did the stage space affect movement? Was the stage space used as a vehicle for the relationship?

When the platform areas of the set were in the theatre for the final week of rehearsal, the purpose of the exercises became to merge a group from the composite units and have the ensemble deal with the theatrical space. The first exercise dealt with the stage and auditorium. The actors explored silently; touching, hearing, seeing everything they encountered on their motivated journey through the theatre. Interesting to note was how the actors had developed a sensitivity to each other's space. Contact was no longer an obstacle but part of confident exploration. From this exercise, the director discerned that the actors were more able to allow an uninhibited filling of the theatrical space during performance.

After the above experience, the actors were ready for a more intimate group exercise. With all the actors and the director in a circle, each took a turn looking around and giving something, or some part of himself, to the others. Next, was a line-through. The actors were to suppress all vocal and physical gesture and merely say the words with the thought behind them. The purpose of this was to experience the eruption of reality that occurred from the sublimation of the intonation and expression previously explored. An intense communication ensued.

Immediately following the line-through, the director slowly and calmly asked the actors to allow an improvisation of the play, scene by scene. The improvisation began, continued and ended as the ensemble sensations dictated. The abstracted, highly ritualistic event of The Balcony thus happened. The participants of the rite were spellbound with the occurrence. The event was the actuality

of the mystic energy the director had analyzed as the concept of the Theatre of Cruelty.

Subsequently, the director received favorable comment from those actors previously dubious of the import of the exercise sessions. Question had arisen as to the purpose of ensemble exercise as the group would never be totally together on stage at one time. The group now understood the energy of The Balcony and its dependence on the ensemble, theatre and audience. The participants were then ready for the curtain call, the director's final comment on the world of the play.

Audience Reaction

The director chose one moment to come full circle with the play and confront the audience with her interpretation of The Balcony as a game, a game implying the horror of illusion. She hoped the audience, whether disgusted, bored or critical, would come to realize their own inabilities: Man's need for illusion (magnified by the simple need to attend theatre), and to realize, too, that criticism is an attempt to have authority over one's own confidence. For those with insight into the philosophical import of Genet, the moment shared compassion for the playwright and laughter at the idiocy of man. This is not to say that audience members unfamiliar with Genet are idiots, but that they have denied something of themselves in the act of watching an event and not gleaning anything from it. The director believes there was not one person unaffected by the curtain call.

After the black-out of Scene Nine, the lights went up on the entire stage. The cast was spread throughout in areas they had chosen themselves. The ensemble directly confronted the audience with laughter, their hideous reaction to what they had just been through. In so doing, a comment evolved on the game of the play. The action was taken one step beyond the confines of the script to explain the reality of the experience. The moment was horrifying in the awareness of man's inability to break through illusion. As the audience left the theatre for their own worlds, another level of reality was confronted.

The first night of The Balcony established the standard audience groupings; those unable to be open to the experience, those open to and involved either positively or negatively with the experience, and those objectively involved. The audience was small, consisting mostly of older people. A few left in disgust at intermission. For those remaining, the respite was perplexingly quiet. During the second act, the audience was either bored and squeamish, or abandoned and reacting to the humour and philosophical content with "self conscious giggles"⁹³ or sighs of comprehension.

Subsequent audiences were larger, signifying that those present were there out of curiosity and choice. The bored portion of the audience was obvious in its desire not to intellectualize and was turned off. In actuality, intellectualization was not a necessary demand. The goal was rather to have the audience allow

⁹³ Dave Alexander, Review for The Balcony, The Greensboro Record, November 30, 1972.

self-subjugation to the event of the play. Part of this grouping were not willing to accept this and turned off in fear of being attacked, "hardly fare for the weak of stomach nor sensitive of ear."⁹⁴

Other audience members gave favorable reaction to the production with what was actually a negative action. They were obviously disgusted with the events and content of the play. It was reported to the director that, at one intermission, a cast member was encountered in the courtyard by some patrons who were leaving. The actors were wished "the most success" in a highly facetious manner. The other grouping in the classification of involved audience were those whose overall response was a heavy sigh when the production had run its cycle.

The majority of the audience were participants who seemed to have come with prior knowledge of the playwright and/or existential philosophy. They wanted to see how the play would be done and to expand their insights. The director perceived this from the laughter at events or thoughts in the play whose impact required previous knowledge. There was also a continuing vocal overtone of affirmation and recognition from the audience. The director received a note from a faculty member in the Romance Language Department whom she had met only once: "I saw The Balcony on Sunday. It was a stupendous (and frightening) performance; by far the best play I've seen here yet."⁹⁵

⁹⁴Ibid.

⁹⁵Roch C. Smith, personal letter, December 4, 1972.

The most gratifying reactions for the director were those of persons previously unfamiliar with the playwright, style of theatre or philosophical content, who were able to ponder their experience with The Balcony. The Greensboro Daily News reviewer Joe Knox stated: "I surmise a sense of existence without meaning . . . I have the feeling that one should know Genet to appreciate all the subtleties of The Balcony, and I am uneducated in this respect . . . he seems to be saying that existence reduces to a matter of being needed, believed in."⁹⁶ The director's father, after leaving the theatre, was pensive in saying, "There seem to be layers and layers of reality."⁹⁷

The director believes the majority response to the production was positive and that exposure to Genet and The Balcony has for many stimulated further exploration of the meaning of reality through reading, attending the theatre, or simple examination of life. This, in turn, facilitates digestion of such input. Standards of quality, depth, and participation in theatre should improve and increase with time.

Summation

The director believes her thesis production to have shown well developed skills of composition and conceptualization of analysis. She has, however, learned from her production experience

⁹⁶Joe Knox, Review for The Balcony, The Greensboro Daily News, December 1, 1972.

⁹⁷Horace C. Buxton, personal comment, December 3, 1972.

with The Balcony, that over-intellectualization may in turn subtract from the thrust of the play. Analysis should be in the background. When it is too specifically materialized, the theatrical event becomes a resultant product instead of an organic experience.

This director's production of The Balcony was a theatrical event caught up in itself, losing the essence of reality through a lack of simplicity. Instead of one concise interpretation supported by research, the director jammed together all elements she felt philosophically pertinent and attempted to have the audience understand them all. One simple through-line would have allowed the thought to come across from the action of the play rather than the seeing of what was imposed on it. For the Greensboro audience to become the participant the director desired, the production should have been based in a very real situation, so that anyone could walk into Madame Irma's. The horrifying and ludicrous levels could build very naturally from there. The implications of Man and The Cruelties would have then become fearfully blatant as the play developed.

The director feels the imposition of her over-intellectualization to have effected all avenues of production. The problem for her was rooted in the thesis condition where it was first established what was to be done, how, and what it would be like. All efforts were then made to fulfill an hypothesized product. However, the director feels she has learned from the rigid situation, imposed in many ways on herself. Her thesis has been a major tool in learning the importance of simplicity and truth in art.

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